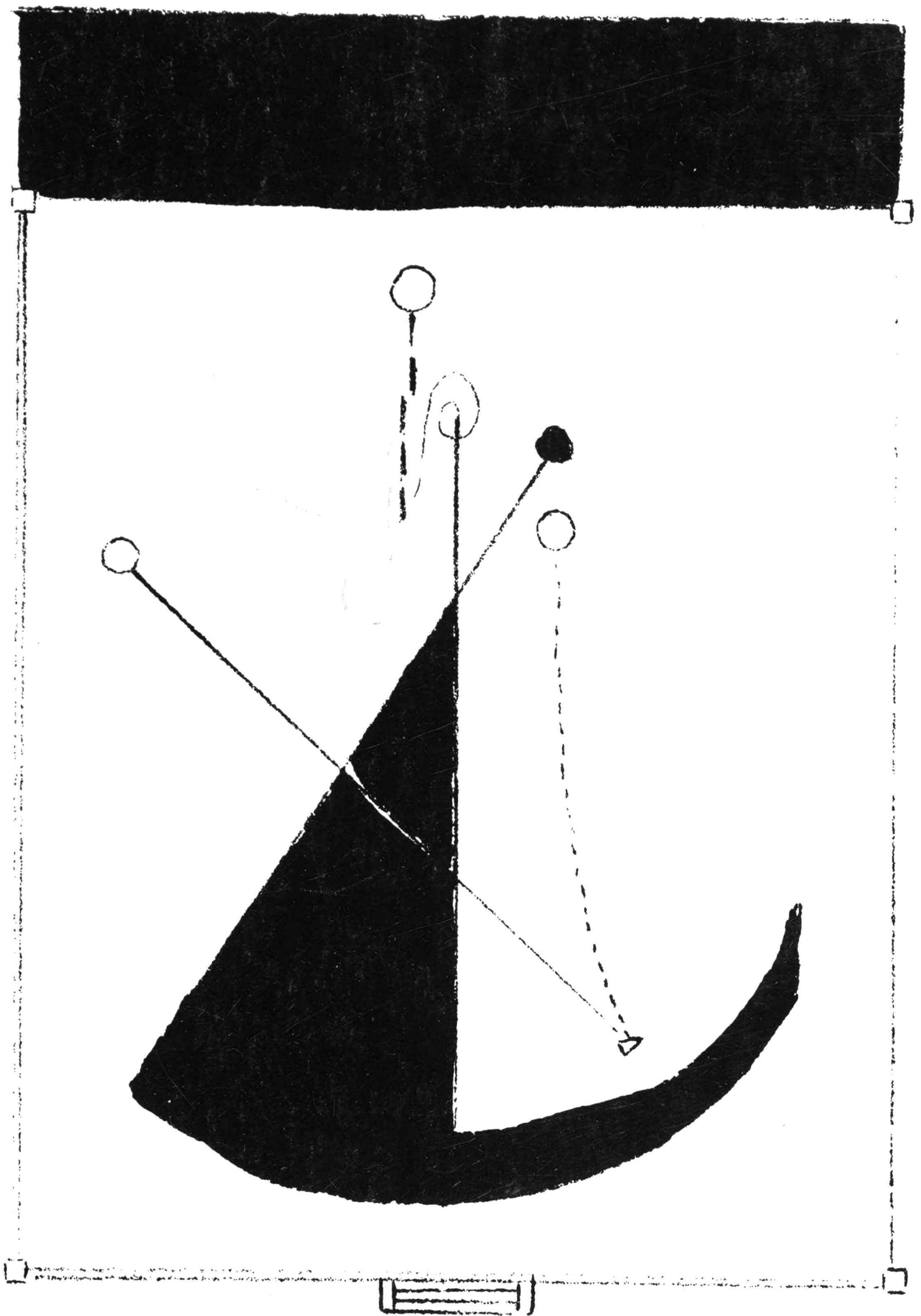


BEAUTY AND CRITIQUE

EDITED BY RICHARD MILAZZO



BEAUTY AND CRITIQUE

BEAUTY AND CRITIQUE

International Standard Book Number: 0-939858-01-0

Library of Congress Card Catalog Number: 82-50165

Printed in USA.

Copyright © 1982 TSL (Time & Space Ltd.)

Mussmann Bruce Publishers

139 West 22 Street

New York, NY 10011

All Rights Reserved.

Individual copyrights revert back to the contributors upon publication.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the authors.

Cover illustration: Ann Wilson, Colored Noh Track, 1981.

(Appears by permission of the artist.)

RICHARD MILAZZO established Out of London Press in 1975. He edited such works as *Ana-tomia: Excerpts from the Writings and Atmospheric Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci* (Turin, 1979), *Gizeh: The Invisible Philosophy* (Turin, 1980), and *The Syntactic Revolution: Collected Works of A.L. Gillespie* (Milan, 1981). Recently he edited *La Rosa Disabitata: Transcendental Linguistic Writing in America 1960-1980* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 1981) and *Pontormo's Diary* (Milan: Out of London Press, 1981). He founded in 1981 and co-directs Scitalis Publications, Inc. Currently he is the publisher of *Artmode*.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

- 9 Richard Milazzo: *No Warning*

INTRODUCTION

- 11 Richard Milazzo: *Deer Charge: A Tract on Sentiment and Style*

I SEMBLANCE AND MEDIATION

- 19 Ericka Beckman: *It's What's Up Front*
23 Jack Goldstein: *Mind Over Matter*
26 Barbara Kruger: *Sculpted in Marble Next to the Sparling Pond*
28 Allan McCollum: *False Pictures*
30 Robert Longo: *Voices for Solid Life*

II MEANING AND THE TEMPORAL NEGATIVE

- 37 Valentine Tatransky: *Criticism in the Realm of Silence*
42 Deniz Firincioğlu: *Beauty and the Pursuit of Meaning*
45 Karsten Harries: *The Pursuit of Presence in Modern Art*
59 Charles Bernstein and S.B. Laufer: *Meaning the Meaning: Arakawa's Critique of Space*
67 Charles Riley: *Spengler's Atelierbraun*
73 Semih Firincioğlu: *Multivalence in the Work of Art*

III EXCODIFICATION AND THE ACTUALIZED PROPOSITION

- 81 Linda Mussmann: *As Metaphysical Cake*
92 Maureen Connor and Meg Shore: *Beauty and the Beast: A Dialogue*
97 Harmony Hammond: *Monstrous Beauty: The Woman Gone Wild*
104 Rosemary Mayer: *Luxe*
112 Donna Dennis: *Venacular Architecture, Feminism and the Personal*
115 Carla Liss: *Beauty and Strength*

IV THE DISMANTLED SIGN AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL PROP

- 123 Ann Wilson: *Performed Assemblage For Abstract Theater*
129 Alexander Alland, Jr.: *Beauty Is Not the Question*
137 Sophie Hawkes: *Object and Actor: Five Fetishes*
142 Angus Fletcher: *Basic Definitions of Threshold For A Theory of Labyrinths*
153 Jun Maeda: *Making Things That Are Not Things*
155 Raffaele Perrotta: *The Sign — Symbol Circum-Scribing-Itself*
162 Michèle Cone: *Scenography: The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Mise-en-Scène*

- 173 CONTRIBUTORS

NO WARNING

The transparency of any term is a simple ultimate. Conversely, the opacity is an ulterior surface. They comprise the arc of modal cardinality.

Cardinal to the notion that beauty is a (possible) form of critique is the hypothesis that beauty and critique are cotenable. Cotenability functions like an awkward universal: it determines the joint suitability of counterfactuals.¹ Through the arch of mirror-death passes the chartreuse coyote.

Hypothesis is the third bracket of alien consciousness. The inextricable grace and gratuitous menace of mirror-death obvert the brackets of Notion² and Actuality — N)

HYP (A. Lured by the beauty of appearances withdrawing impenetrably into appearances, the obverted brackets of hypothesis disclose the modal arch of structuration.³

Individuated structures comprise the non restrictive ordinal modes of structuration: (I) Semblance and Mediation, (II) Meaning and the Temporal Negative, (III) Excodification and the Actualized Proposition, (IV) the Dismantled Sign and the Transcendental Prop. Because the terms of individuation exceed the brackets of assumed existence (the Ontological Code), the modes are ultimately unmarked⁴ by statural distribution and marked provisionally by the cardinal cotenability of the arc. As the ordinal modes negatively approach the semblance of a temporally mediated incommensurable narrative, they effectuate cardinal modes in the art of philosophy.

Critique is the moment when beauty places itself in quotes; beauty is the moment critique places itself in quotes. Their contenability occurs, in effect, the moment when quotation places itself in quotes. The arc of modal cardinality conduces propositionally to the third bracket of alien consciousness. Bracketed as such, the marks belong to the parable of transcendental reference.

Cardinal to the transcendental image of meaning is the sheer asymptotic instrumentality of a modal universe.

Grateful appreciation is expressed to the publishers, Claudia Bruce and Linda Mussmann; to the contributors, without whose generous cooperation the book would not have been possible; to Lia Colla and Bonnie Nielsen for their assistance in the design of the book; and to Rebecca Chalker for her special help.

Finally, I express my gratitude to Tricia Collins for her editorial advice, patience and invaluable support during the project.

RICHARD MILAZZO

REFERENCES

- (1) Nelson Goodman, "The Problem of Counterfactual Conditionals" in *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Leonard Linsky (Urbana, Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1952), p. 239.
- (2) G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, tr. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 795-96.
- (3) Intentionality can be ascribed to acts of anomaly. The paradigm-shifts in Kuhn outstrip the code-shifts in Barthes. Cf. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, tr. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), and Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1969).
- (4) John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 79-80.

Richard Milazzo

DEER CHARGE
A TRACT ON
SENTIMENT AND STYLE

The object is a semblant embodying the subtlety and outrage of appearances.

Mediated style drives the objectual projection from the catastrophe of primary meanings to the modal continuity of obstacles.

When the stylized obstacle haunts the system-steps of world content, it attains the edge of denotative sublimity. With futile but infallible step, the meanings arrange a disparate narrative. Rationality, as such, displays the world glamor of self displacement.

Ornamental hypotheses are endowed with the force of non contextual narrative and with the beauty of alienated themes. They risk the mirror's reverse spectacle.

Like a peacock or a disassembled fan, mediation actualizes the obverted mirror and pushes its content toward the overlooked temporality of the prop. The synthetic and analytical moods reflect a travesty of exquisite distances and approximations, unmoved in their fatal, continuity-struck, palm-like privacy. On one side of the transparency, the virtuostic motive is animated by the numb severance of the mirror; on the other side, the terror of unnoticed negations is circumscribed by the stylistic difficulties of unrequited appearance and the incongruent abstract specificity of sentimental shock, *bella e buona*.

At the core of the actualized proposition is a black palm, the opacity of the obverted mirror, negligent, unswayed by codification. Its essence is the *chaise longue* of non statement.

From the staggering chrysalis of ostension, there emerges a terrorized privacy mediated by the plush catastrophe of auxiliary meanings.

Situated between the haunted edge of the mirror and the hooves of blond necessity ordered by the connotative self, the object is an inactual effectuation of soft targets. The temporality of the obstacle displaces the universal's function as a tautological simile. Through the negation, the point is finally reached where there are incomplicit meanings (expendables) disinterestedly circumventing relation — whether it be the sheer relation of cognition or the applied relation of gesture — floating with undaunted, sentimental violence toward new obstacles. In the theatrical sublimity (and privacy) of negation, judgment is the journey of a swollen form. Drastic concentration (the expressive stasis of appearance) and hypothetic representation (the neo-ironic expendability of images) delineate the unparsed, transcendental actuality of the semblant.

The propositional style subverts the counter-reality of ultimates while assiduously prolonging the abbreviated beauty of Icarus' flight.

Behind the appearance-counter exists supposedly a reality-source, a mirror which is darker than the cave inside the mirror, a non mirror in effect which is inside the cave and functions like a republic of solar definitions: it is shadow-proof (just — in Plato's sense) and yet simultaneously nothing but a sentimental and ruthless blend of indirect experiences. The object's statural autonomy as proposition is supplanted by

the parable's semantic (objectual) actuality. It is as if the narrative of flawless entities is comprised of predicate flaws. Darkness surface-rides expediency while convenience purposes the sentiment of indirection.

The unhypothetical first object is a front for the despair and solace, the sophistication of existential quantifiers.

The decorative analytic is a parsed omni-modal. Meaning executes the object the moment experience stalls the expendability of appearance. The transcendent expendable (instantiated prop) construed as the para-continuity of the blind image features the split-object. Sentiment thrives on the ambiguity of haughty surfaces — such as those of autonomy and contextuality. Subject to the authority of a distant moment, reality is the institutionalization of the real, and the real is merely an authoritative fear of the actual. Contextualized representation dictates the status of semantic attitudes and authorizes the power of the object, whereas divided purpose — the New Edge — predicates the dignity of meaning's objectual destiny and renders the authority of the object (the image-in-itself) and even autonomy itself (inverted illusion) powerless. Meaning-expendability is the ruthless source of the transcendental ornament.

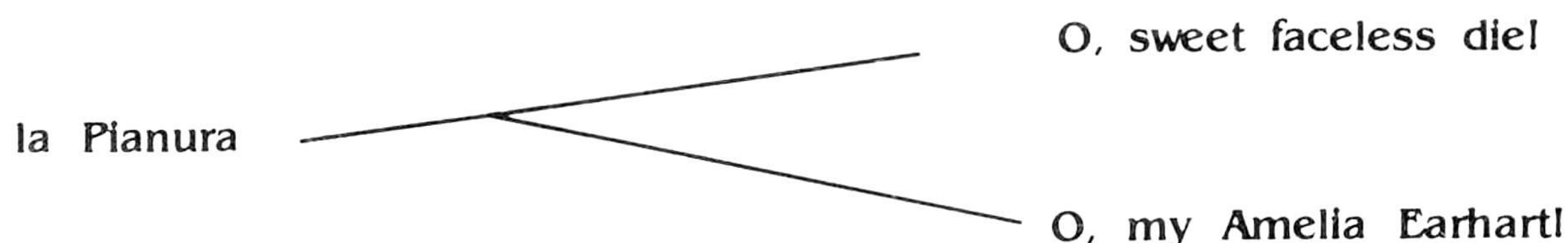
The actual captures the provisional duplicity of appearances.

Mediated style executes judgment as modal device of the obstacle through the numinous reverse destiny of divided purpose precipitated by the parted object in the parable and the propositional mode. Essence is reified escape in reverse. Modal ostension brackets the parted object and wields the mercy of the prop dispassionately.

Disappearance — the convergence of the sudden and the virtual — exstantiates the temporal negative. Preference as the surface of parsed disappearance delimits the supremacy of a merciless *farfalla*. The obstacle is no longer conduit for the image-in-itself. Preferred actuality and unexpendable displacement grant the mercy and winged evidence of a modal imperative.

The estate of the parable and the proposition is situated where the plain exceeds the desert, where the spasm of the allegory states itself with the sentiment and style of mere similitude. In accordance with the New Rationality, the rancor of the triangle is displaced by the burst continuity of the obstacle floating in style's invented resistance. Adamant and vast, the brackets of para-continuity express the meta-

attitude — the destiny — of the stylized obstacle and the neo-actuality of mediated style. Allegory is now the vectoral effect of the parable and the proposition.



The metastatic level of the Plain discloses a transcendental mirror wherein the separate domains of the parable and the proposition are mediated by a quality, sentiment, or negation — a grace, neither flamboyant nor correct in *situs*, and situated literally in its own effect — an appearance, which excodifies itself from the contradictory neutralities of autonomy and contextuality and actualizes the prop it engenders with the parsed modal potentiation of a system-jump.

Expressivity as proto-communication or para-articulation claims ultimately a deep-structural reality. But, in fact, expressivity as such is an epic techno-ontological retardation. Prior to its abstract state, there was an existential shorthand figuration current in European art after World War II, where there obtained carefree finalities, hotel attitudes, pieces of loose sky — sentimental obstacles. (And later, to mention prominent examples, not only Picasso's bad mentation paintings but Pollock's works in figural subconsciousness.) In displacing the short-circuited, belated meanings and stylish fears of such figures, abstract realizations categorically rejected, if not precluded, the human figure — again, de Kooning and others are notable exceptions. The crew-cut conflict between abstract expression and its impertinent rival, neo-figuration, seems to involve at present the psycho-economic fear that the former has lost its pseudo-unitary sway — the Totalitarian Difference as inexpendability and sublime judgment — and finally its cultural hegemony. (Fear, even as commercial strategy, presumes a belief-structure, the self-indulgent abnegation of irony.) Simultaneously, transcendental figuration nurtures a ludic pre-nuclear war nostalgia for the human figure. The generic concerns of an abstract expressive work, its destiny as post-conscious universality, are seemingly slower, more lugubrious, darker than the theatrical, automatic predicates of the (individual) Subject, more respectful than the images involved in the figural neo-expressive negation of the figure. Disrespect, here, implies the withdrawal of *belief* in the image as an image-in-itself, and which, consequently, effects a perception that is forcefully deprived of any *immediate* experience in the image — the anti-image thwarting the conditions for unmediated evidence — and is provided instead with a charged expressive *reference* to the history of images or to the semblant construed as the static discontinuity of appearances. Neither believable nor derivative, the image is now mediated, as it

were, by informed bits of judgment (informed, that is, by the obstacle), a Fast History of Empiricism and Solipsism, discrepancy and exaggeration, dread and exuberance. Abstract expressive figuration synthesizes the morose history of Beauty and the hysterical rationality of critical consciousness. History as such becomes a display of arbitrary systems of reference nourished by the obsolescence of the anti-referent. Privacy and ostension exceed each other in History as the Absolute Spectacle and through interpretation as the anxiety of extruded assignation. The synthesis represents the hermeneutic seductions of a profound surface eschatology.

What gets capitalized supra-materially and quoted (emphatically appreciated) in the parted object are the suspended reference and released distance, the substance of its will being in both cases the mortality of style (attitude, taste, characterization, look), fraudulently unintentional and originless. Its totalessness is a sensibility construct, reticulated through the devices of ambiguity (controlled indecision) and violence, much as its ultimatelessness is a shifting interior surface, a perpetual displacement, possessing the value and dexterity of a signic attribution, a vacuum, in effect, imbued with the dexterity of the temporal negative.

The stylized obstacle is the enabling device of meaning-expendability: it mediates the capitalization and quotation as expendables *per se*, rendering inconstant the object's purpose-in-itself.

Semblance thrives on the destiny of divided purpose.

Sentiment as emancipated reference raised to the oblique power of a displacement action manifests the decontextualization of the parted object.

The mirror is a concave warrior.

Mediated style — the Proud Fraudulence — dismantles the sign (itself) while decontextualizing the aura of negation. The fact that the New Reference is private and the outcome of ostension, and thus divided by *il dolce sentimento nuovo*, indicates the degree to which the allegory, construed here as the merciful continuity of appearances, is mediated by the obstacle, and the extent to which modal judgment governs the actuality of the prop. As such, transcendental reference negotiates the stylized negation of *il dolce segno morto*. Meaning endowed with existential style imparts to the mirror's random sustenance the fabulous void of the scissor. The incommensurable narrative as modal affinity puts the displacement on hold.

I SEMBLANCE AND MEDIATION

Ericka Beckman

IT'S WHAT'S UP FRONT

WHAT'S UP FRONT.

Once when I was working at a jewelry counter at Christmas, I noticed something peculiar. From the shopper's point of view, I saw the sales girls, nicely dressed in blouses and scarfs, wearing jewelry and rings. The counters were lined with mirrors that threw the light from gold piece to gold piece. Nothing hindered the sales pitch. Behind the counter the sales girls leaned against the cabinets, one foot scratching or soothing the other. Their stockings were worn or mismatched; they wore slippers.

HE MET HALF WAY, NOT ALL THE WAY.

Making art that concerns itself with the issue of beauty is like doing things for the sake of repeating a pleasure, which is quite different than doing things for the sake

of discovering new powers. Anytime you are doing something that tests your own power, you find yourself playing with other people's rules. It is this conflict between authorities that interests me the most.

TWO MINTS, TWO MINTS IN ONE.

When you use one object over and over for various purposes, the meaning of that object is compounded to the point that the object loses its autonomy. Its meaning crosses over into another object's meaning. It is as if this simple object contained simultaneously two independent meanings. All aspects of my films are subordinated to the presentation of this conflict in meaning.

CHANCE'S TERRITORY.

Take a situation where two characters are pursuing the same goal, and they cross each other at the path. Instead of identifying each character's motives, I will identify the goal, which is on one hand the same object, but means something different to each of them. I will show each person's goal changing, as he may picture its meaning shifting with the circumstances of his quest. A conflict between these two characters would then be filmed as the contents of two mutually-independent goals interacting.

IF YOU WANT IT YOU CAN HAVE IT.

I impose these two goals on the audience for their own consideration. The goals keep moving, to defer the audience's selection. That way a lot of mistakes can happen.

THAT MISTAKE WAS A BEAUTY.

I can't help but think that a mistake that occurred by chance is the most fundamental, and carries with it the unmistakable aura of beauty. A 'chance event' that creates a mistake is not the same idea of chance that a gambler uses to throw a die, or that of an artist who uses chance to arrange compositions of music and poetry. This use of chance is usually imposed upon objects from operators. I am thinking about chance occurrences that seemingly come from nowhere. Imagine a structurally secure artist, building his work bit by bit in a regular way. He is aware of the degree of choice in each of his steps. That choice attests to the possibility of other systems interacting on that particular project. And if he is somewhat of a 'mature' artist, and if this project didn't end up exactly as he had planned, it surely wasn't his lack of skill that caused the mistake. That was chance; when the course of one system's actions is changed by contact with another independent system.

SEIZE THE CHANCE.

In the real world, in the events of our lives, we operate on probability. The probability that 'such and such a thing' occurring contests to chance being a factor present in life. A pungent example of a 'chance event' in our lives is the loss of love. The loss of love means the failure to seize a moment. The 'chance of love' failed the moment we failed to seize it. We can search back upon the events when love was available and went by unseized.

LASSO IN DISTANT OBJECTS.

We aim our actions toward the attainment of goals. We set up these projects of attainment in order to surpass them. But likewise, in a process that seems regulated towards a goal, we see that there are risks and chances that come from the outside. When a choice is made, we have seized a chance from outside this self-imposed order on the world. It is at this precise moment that freedom is felt. Freedom becomes a two-way change between 'me and my goal'. And if the goal is only there to be surpassed, the process towards it becomes the freedom.

GIDDY UP COWBOY.

'Me and my goal' are perceived as constants in a relationship with the process of moving, which is studded with chance, risks and choice. We ought to have eyes under our eyes. The eyes that see our eyes, see a regulated world. The eyes below see inside, and recognize the freedom in taking chances.

JUST ONE LOOK.

We have one set of eyes and it is difficult for them to concentrate simultaneously on objects in close range and on objects that are far away. The objects that are far away look softer and move less in relation to the self. Our vision of these distant objects is usually impaired by objects that are in close range, which move in a more constant relationship with the self. Likewise, in our perception of the event, we are likely to first perceive the close range meaning, the surface meaning, the apparent meaning. This is why film viewing is often one of just following the continuity, or the objects that move in a more constant relation to the viewer. There is hardly time to observe a deeper intention.

FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALL.

A female impersonator is constantly moving his hands, flicking his hair, walking across the stage, all in order to keep our eyes moving, so we can't secure them on the mistake. It is a known fact to film editors that by cutting on action, you can make

up for a drastic blunder in continuity. It's a perceptual truth that we connect objects of similar color and size, and that we follow movement. Our eyes never tire of movement. Yes, you may note a change in the field, but what you will talk about are the consistencies. You can't reproduce the changing aspect, it takes more concentration. If presented with a constant, we will favor that constant. In life, we are assessing the probabilities of a certain action's outcome, in other words, favoring a constant. And the trickery of the female impersonator lies in the fact that he is moving. That is our constant. We see that he is moving and acting like a female.

The film is the form of art watching that keeps the viewer in the 'present' of a literally changing experience. Intention is deeper and requires contemplation, the kind of contemplation usually associated with viewing art objects at close range. It is usually that after this intention is grasped that there is more freedom in experiencing the film. The false sense of freedom, the experience of watching moving things and feeling like we are moving with them, is what makes film so popular. If there is no intention, on the part of the film director, other than flaring images of continuity in front of the eyes of the viewers, like the female impersonator, there is a false sense of freedom, beauty and truth, which the creative in us recognizes once the film is over. The feeling of being gypped. The viewer has entered into a relationship with the film, giving the film the same attention that events in his life demand, in hopes of getting something in return. In a bad film, the director protects the film, making it a relationship of 'want' on the part of the audience, and 'not getting'.

In a good painting, the image says to the viewer, "For you to understand me, for you to 'have' me, you must meet me here. And once you have met me, you will want me forever." From this point on, the viewer and the artist commence a relationship of purchasing. Relief is physical and material; if the viewer wants, or is disposed to, he can purchase the painting. In film, the relationship is not so practically solved. If the film is a good one, the audience will want to keep the relationship of meeting. The audience will wait to see the film again, to get more from it. The audience witnessing a bad film is given no authority.

HANDS UP! PUT YOUR HANDS UP!

For an exchange to be made, the authority must pass from the artist, who has the power to give, to the audience who has the power to take the experience away. For there to be an exchange, the authority must provide a chance for that, must relinquish his authority, and the other in his relationship must seize the chance.

MY LUCKY DAY!

The artist and the audience are mutually independent. It is not by 'chance' that these exchanges occur, it is that the two took the chance in meeting each other.

Jack Goldstein

MIND OVER MATTER

Media is sensational.

Light is the gesture of progress; a far-off view of a city at night gives a reading of the pulse of man.

Painting from a photograph produces a clean 'negative' of art without expression.

An explosion is a beauty before its consequence.

Art and War use cold reason to immobilize imagination.

Art is not about wanting control over your subjective. Art is more about the futility of being conscious of your body in a world that makes body out-of-synch.

Technology does everything for us so that we no longer have to function in terms of experience. We function in terms of esthetics.

Sky is the meeting ground for what art and world desire...and where they expire. Technology is as abstract as Expressionism.

Tapping on danger zones realizes the distance in escape and attraction.

A Futuristic vision sees the display in destruction — a burning building is not too different than the 4th of July as celebration.

The horizon line double-exposed can be read formally, as a silhouette, but technically it is the documentation of an event: earthquake, war, etc.

Dangerous objects are glamorous places to be.

Expression resides in energy: concentrated, controlled. A bomb is a detonation of expression under control.

The Abstract Expressionists used the canvas as a reference to a celestial space; painting a picture of outer-space theatrically embodies that connection.

Art made from media captures the spectacle a "self-destructive civilization" makes of itself.

Art should be a trailer for the future.

Painting has been reduced to a word or indicator for art object: painting means like movie screen.

Opticality, in art based on media, actuates content.

Presentation is all about attitudes.

A black and white picture gets you to think in black and white. The viewing time for contemplating esthetics is interrupted by the fact that the picture was taken and the question of why it was taken.

Sensibility is defined by the degree of restraint that is put into a work.

Technology is as detached, impartial, cold, and ruthless as time.

The result of expression only determines the limits of "self."

Spontaneity is a metaphor for risk.

A close-up of what can only be seen from a distance is as close we can come to a true abstraction.

Sky is to the 20th Century what landscape was to the 19th Century.

The by-products of culture symbolize our position in the world. The details of living prevent us from seeing symbolically.

Paintings are like movie sets that showcase special effects as edited from a world narrative.

Media is what you re-present when you're representing Everyone.

Barbara Kruger

SCULPTED IN MARBLE NEXT TO THE SPARKLING POND

We are walking through a forest, a fantastic display of all that is awesome and powerful in nature. The sun is golden orange and flushes the azure sky with a warming red glow. We come upon a sparkling pond next to which stands a smoothly hewn marble sculpture. The sun's rays coat the side of the figure, a male nude, classic in its power and assurance. He is gorgeous. An anthem. Behind him is a painting, a masterly depiction of heroism rendered with humour and pathos. A picture of brotherhood. A heritage. Through your worshipful response, these objet d'art becomes much like the insistent sun and soft breezes which caress them: they seem to be nature. But perhaps they are not. Perhaps they are the figures and products of social constructions. We touch your hands softly when we mention this,

but you recoil from both our suggestion and our touch. You have an investment in the value of their adoration, in the “nature” of their staying power. Your gaze is devotional. Our’s is touristic. Sometimes we hang out in the forest but our representations strain the appearance of naturalism. We loiter outside of trade and speech and are obliged to steal language. We are very good mimics. We replicate certain words and pictures and watch them stray from or coincide with your notions of fact and fiction. Like you, we can be charmed by mastery but our pleasures are not defined by connoisseurship. We like to couple the ingratiation of wishful thinking with the criticality of knowing better. We are delighted by the sensuous nature of the forest and its relative freedom from the constraints of society and architecture. That is what defines its difference from the gorgeous man who stands, sculpted in marble, next to the sparkling pond. We do not wish to destroy what we think is difference.

Allan McCollum

FALSE PICTURES

I think that there must be something false about the desire to look at a picture; it couldn't possibly be something we are born with. It must be something we grow into, like the way a dog comes to desire such a strangely contrived activity as being taken for a walk on a leash.

I am working to construct charade, in which I am surrounded with false pictures: pseudo-artifacts which beckon me into the desire to look at a picture, but which are complete in doing just that, and that alone. My paintings and drawings don't serve a proper function — how could they? They're only representations, props, and surrogates: not real pictures at all. If I can engineer this charade the way I want, I think I can transform the seemingly innocent act of looking at art into a slightly nightmarish duplication of itself.

Then, as my work accumulates, it can act as an invocation: false pictures to call forth a false self. I can draw out such perverse forms as my desire to look has taken and address them false-face to false-face, each on its own level, matching one kind of fraudulence with another.

Robert Longo

VOICES FOR SOLID LIFE

"A SCREAMING COMES ACROSS THE SKY" — sound distance.

Yeah, but who is? Why? What — Who cares?

I LOVE THE TALL BUILDINGS
THEY'RE SOMEHOW REASSURING TO ME
ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT

Like this guy I know, he'd just come to the city the night before. Staying at his usual

uptown hotel. An early riser — always knows the time, doesn't own a watch. Arms heavy, gravity in his gait, he came into my home. Not looking too good — actually pretty shaken.

That morning at 7:13 he witnessed a man
falling from the top of the Chrysler Building.

The image froze on the back of my eyes. My response was of envy. I could picture it.

"Your art is like this — permanently emotionally lost tangents."

The next thing I thought of, after this thing about the guy falling off a building, was a quality. The quality of cinema. Modern art has had this quality. Like *The Blob*, art and cinema pursue and ingest things that by appearance and tradition have been outside of its own nature. In the case of cinema it followed literature, then found death, sex — guns and bodies, violence and pleasure.

The way one would die in the movies
fifty years ago, like James Cagney being shot by a cop
is dramatically different than the way
someone dies in a movie today —

Just picture that, now compare.

Now death is experienced immediately, in a sense, through moving pictures, film/television on a daily basis — so there is a numbing effect. Violence is not seen as a peak moment imbued with theatricality as with Cagney but as a continuum of flat images — with the sound off there's little difference between people on Soul Train or the secret service agent being sent lunging through the air from a bullet meant for the president.

In that sense death has become the best dance.

"So violence is entertainment?" — people can and will forget the consequences, and then will people start to see real violence as entertainment?

"So...living in this city poses the possibility that you may become someone else's ENTERTAINMENT..."

..."and what about the children?"...YOU BETTER RUN, THOSE KIDS GOT KNIVES!

So value your knowledge, your vision, your passions, your self worth. Understand the outside and the inside of city life. At home I'm relaxed. I dress in comfortable rags. Visitors are screened, never the unannounced. Everything inside is under my control, my control.

Now you go outside — first you must prepare.
Prepare, like a city samurai.
Spring loaded self-love — you choose your armour
and out the door, and you're ready
for any fucking lunatic that comes in your way.

BECAUSE NO ONE WANTS TO DIE IN PUBLIC — SEE.

“new knowledge for ugly times”
The pursuit of positive imagery through negative thinking.
“make a motion, pull it tighter”

Violence, it can be good for you, high energy impact, fast release, a venting process.
Violence like on TV, nobody really gets hurt, just paid.

And when life goes beyond word? You have an argument — one thing leads to another and before you know it something physical happens. “I want to punch your face in.” Buy a punching bag, draw a picture on and go to it. You'll feel better.

“Imagined physical involvement is just as satisfying when felt deep enough, as the real thing.” Reach for love...rage...watch.

When I was a kid, one of my favorite summer games was called “Who Could Fall Dead the Best.” It involved at least 3 kids, a toy gun (the more realistic the better) and a location — a bench, open field, woods, hills, etc. The object of the game was exactly what the game was called. One kid would set himself up with the gun and the other kids would individually have to stage an image of dying for the one with the gun who shoots and judges. The game was incredibly orchestrated. One kid, Brian, had his own very special style. He would first request that the shootist shoot him with a machine gun, then he would set up the image. He would run to the water, as if he were an escaped prisoner desperate, trying to get to the water and swim for freedom, and then just as he got at the water's edge he would be shot. Twisting and turning, arching into the air, water flying in sheets — for special effects he carried in his hand about 20 small pebbles which he would release as he fell violently into the water. The pebbles would provide the strafing effect of machine gun fire across the water surface — realism isn't easy. Brian's death was always so

beautiful. So the object of the game was for each kid to present a picture to the shooter/judge. The best then got to be the one with the gun.

My memories of these games are always enhanced by the visual elsewhere of my mind — they're all falling in elegant slow motion with some soundtrack, like a Marlboro commercial.

"My god the stuff we carry around in our heads."

...a world view. What about Europe. I like the way it looks but the language thing is a drag. "THE NEUTRON SENSIBILITY." A babble bomb after it's dropped, and after fallout, everyone will speak the same language.

In some European city.

So this guy goes crazy.

Alone in his room, he goes to the window.

Quietly pulls down the blinds.

Puts a gun to his head

and blows his brains out.

In an American city.

Some guy goes crazy, alone in his room.

He goes quietly to his window.

Opens it up

and starts shooting the people in the street below

Heah — that's culture!

"Static violence."

"Violence in your work might be construed as the imagery-Establishment galvanized by the principle of *active distance*."

In much of my work the issue of violence and beauty revolves around a point of impact, that peak of passion that is then turned into forever.

"The conflict of disparate half-meanings."

The artist can create a tightrope that the viewer must choose to walk.

"They are open answers, that merely lead to deeper questions. And the questions end, finally, not in the depicted individuals, but in the invisible society that first created, and now propels them."

The artist as Guardian of culture.

With the tremendous advances in media communications, the world media network is so eager for a war to "cover." Setting up an anchorman, "live color from the front" — everything is at such a ridiculous distance. Thank god for this distance, it protects us from the fears of what we have created as "inevitables," and hopefully

this distance will allow us to find a solution for these “inevitables.”
Pretend they’re not your problems.
Just something you’re watching on TV.

II
MEANING
AND
THE TEMPORAL NEGATIVE

Valentine Tatransky

CRITICISM IN THE REALM OF SILENCE

When the editor of this book first spoke to me and told me its title, I couldn't have been more delighted. Here was a stranger — I had never met him before — inviting me to write about two subjects that are close to my heart. I love beauty and I love to criticize.

The first thing that came to mind as I began to think about what to say were all the beautiful and wise words that have already been said about beauty and criticism. A lot of rubbish has been said, too, but the first thing that occurred to me wasn't that. I wondered whether this essay, like the book that Walter Benjamin wanted to create — a book consisting entirely of quotations, so placed, as to create the effect of a seamless, self-illuminating whole — shouldn't also be a collection of

quotes. However, then, when I did think about the decline of criticism in our time and the general lack of appreciation for beauty — so characteristic of our age — it seemed that something had to be said. Not necessarily something new, but it had to be said with emphasis and with a different kind of emphasis.

There is no difference between what the artist does and what the critic does. Both the artist and the critic do exactly the same thing. They create beauty, or to put it more accurately, they see beauty. To repeat what I just said: there is no difference between the creative effort and the critical effort. To create is to criticize and to criticize is to create.

I'm not trying to blur the distinction that can always be made between an actual work of art and a specific act of criticism, whether spoken or written. I'm not saying that these categories can't exist. They do and they remain only categories. Nor am I going to resort here to the conventional argument that because a piece of criticism is language it can therefore, in the hands of gifted writers, people like Baudelaire or Ruskin for example, rise on occasion to the level of literature. I'm sticking to the common definitions.

Criticism is in the judging, i.e., in the experience of beauty. And in being a reflection of beauty, criticism is beauty itself. And by beauty, I mean the best that is seen in the world. Mishima understood this so well. He once said that "criticism's method is to evoke silence without calling on beauty."¹ Criticism has no need to call on beauty because in being an act of criticism it is already beauty itself. How right was Mishima when he said that today this power of possessing beauty through silence has been lost!

Someone reading this might feel that I've said or what I've quoted Mishima as saying or the way that I've quoted him makes no sense. After all, how can criticism — this business of fault-finding, of pointing to errors and demerits, and all its expressions of disapproval, so typical of this profession — ever be equated with a methodology based on silence? Even if we phrase our definition of criticism a little more elegantly and say that the critic is the one who estimates the value of creative work, criticism's odious connotation, as something secondary to creative work, as something hard on the ears — at once grating and impotent — still remains. We're still left with the blunt question — if criticism is to mean anything — of good and bad. And yet, it is precisely when you start to consider these connotations about the rudeness of criticism that you will begin to have an intimation of what it is that we mean when we say that the true critic creates and "imposes" silence so that beauty may exist. I'm going to use a metaphor: the faster you break the silence, the more quickly will it be restored; the more blunt the critic's language, the sooner will you

¹Yukio Mishima, *Forbidden Colors*, (New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1974), p. 108.

find yourself alone with beauty. Unfortunately, this metaphor, while it suggests something of what I mean, is, probably, misleading. I'm not speaking here of the style of the critic's prose or his vocabulary. Criticism, as I said, is in the judging. It's not in the words. As Clement Greenberg said: "A value judgment doesn't mean formulation or statement; a putting of something into thoughts and words; a value judgment takes place; the thoughts and words come afterwards."² I'm speaking here of the experience of beauty. It is as opinion that criticism rises to the dignity of silence.

What irritates me is the way in which intellectual discourse today has been turned into superstition — through talk. Nothing exposes the naivete of people in intellectual matters as much as does this concern for "criteria" or "standards" or "objectivity" in the evaluation of beauty. If people, when they express this sort of concern, would simply recognize that in talking that way they're defining the intellectual as if he were a mathematician or chemist, and relegating the critic, like the artist, to the status of an anti-intellectual, then this confusion wouldn't be so thick. That, of course, is putting things too simply. Most people, to one degree or another, sense that this dichotomy between scientist and artist isn't quite right. They sense that there is an intellectual element in the critique of beauty. And they are right.

I'm insisting that there is no difference between what the critic does and the artist does in order to tear criticism away from the garrulity of talk and restore it to its proper intellectual domain — silence. If criticism is to be an intellectual activity, then it must remain within the realm of silence. The *substance* of this idea is not new.

You can't imagine how pleased I was to find at the very beginning of John Simoni's 528-page *Art Critics and Criticism in 19th Century America* (an unpublished Ph.D dissertation completed in 1952) — the first and thus far only such study of its kind and scope — that as early as 1810 an anonymous American critic, in a discussion inspired by Lawrence Sterne's writings, had set forth the principles of criticism and stated, in no uncertain terms, that criticism is an art.³ This critic was not at all disturbed by the fact that taste varies from person to person. He said that all men are more or less able to feel, so let them judge. He expressed the confidence that accurate perceptions of taste belong to the refined and sensible. This critic, however, was an exception. Most Americans of the 19th century didn't

²Clement Greenberg, "Art Criticism," *Partisan Review*, Vol. XLVII, No. 1 (1981), 37.

³"*Sparsa Colligo*," *Port Folio*, Vol. IV (October 1810), 334-335.

share this view. They were more interested in the meaning of beauty than they were in experiencing beauty. And so, it was to the English writer John Ruskin that they turned.

Ruskin was the critic who had the greatest impact on American aesthetic thought during the 19th century. I know of no better account of Ruskin's influence on Americans than Roger Stein's brilliant book *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900*. In this study, Stein examines why Americans reacted so strongly to Ruskin's writings. We learn that they were interested in only certain aspects of Ruskin's theory of art. They were not interested in Turner's paintings or in Ruskin's defense of Turner's reputation. Stein explains that Americans were interested in the more basic question of the meaning of art and the role it was to play in American society.

There were two main things about Ruskin's theory of art that made it go over big with Americans. The first (and most fundamental) thing were the moral premises of Ruskin's theory of art. The most significant American art critic of the mid-19th century — William James Stillman — saw in Ruskin's discussion of beauty "the first correct indication of the final cause of Beauty," namely God. As Stein puts it, Ruskin's theocentric approach, by referring perceptual theory ultimately back to God rather than the self, "saved" Stillman and his circle from "the troubled waters of subjectivity."⁴ Another group of American writers, known as the "transcendentalists," feared that aesthetic discrimination — "taste" as the traditionalists understood the word — was a form of materialism. Therefore, for them, the equation of beauty with truth and goodness was extremely important.

The other thing that made Ruskin's theory of art so appealing to Americans was his dictum "truth to nature." According to Ruskin, you judge art in terms of its fidelity to nature. On this point, Ruskin anticipated another issue of great interest to Americans. The meaning of nature and the way it is perceived was, as Stein points out, a constant source of debate in the United States before Ruskin's writings first made their appearance here. Ruskin's theory of art brought together (and reconciled) the two issues — morality and nature — that Americans were most concerned about in their considerations of beauty.

However, as that quote from the anonymous critic in 1810 suggests, there is another side to the story. There are the exceptions. Stein says that in the history of American aesthetic thought, it is the ideas of Edgar Allan Poe rather than those of Ruskin and his disciples that are revolutionary. What was revolutionary about Poe's ideas?

Poe made the bold pronouncement in "The Poetic Principle" that the sole

⁴Roger Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 118.

arbiter of poetry is Taste.⁵ He divided the world of the mind into three categories, the Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. He then defined the domain of each category: Intellect concerns itself with Truth, Taste informs us of the Beautiful, while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty. Hence, he made Beauty the province of the poem. These ideas were too advanced for Poe's time — and they're still too advanced for our time.

Before I come to my conclusion, I want to give one more example from history. I remember how surprised and impressed I was to read what the editor of the *New York Daily Tribune*, Whitelaw Reid, had said should have been Whistler's reply to Ruskin's remark, that he, Whistler, "threw pots of paint in the face of the public and called it art." Reid said that Whistler should have retorted with the declaration that "the great writer sometimes deluged the same patient countenance with buckets of rhetoric and called it criticism."⁶

Today beauty is deluged with buckets of rhetoric. As Mishima said, "Beauty makes men everywhere chatter." This incessant stream of talk — whether its from a psychological, literary, political, sociological or philosophical standpoint — is still derived from premises based on either ethics or nature.

It is all the more urgent for the critic, if he is to be a critic, to impose silence forcibly — beginning with his own mouth. As Henri Matisse once said, and as Jules Olitski more recently said — quoting Matisse — "He who wants to dedicate himself to painting should start by cutting off his tongue."

The only true language for criticism is the language of silence. It is a hard language to master. This language does not call on beauty. It is dry, austere, and matter of fact. It points to the material properties of beauty, but it is not beauty itself nor is it criticism as such. This language is opaque and logical. The main effect of this language is that it creates a vacuum. Silence reverberates against its walls. Here, in the midst of this dumbness, beauty exists.

The language of silence is a sensuous language because it doesn't allow the intellect to touch the body of beauty with words. It is also a profoundly intellectual language because it keeps the intellect within its own domain.

The would-be intellectual expresses his hatred of sex through talk. A beautiful woman passes by and what do men do? They chatter — to alleviate their feelings of tension and uneasiness and nervousness.

The critic, on the other hand, creates silence, and in so doing, finds himself face to face with beauty.

⁵Edgar Allan Poe, "The Poetic Principle," *Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 506.

⁶Editorial (Whitelaw Reid), "Critic and Painter," *New York Daily Tribune*, Vol. XXXVIII, December 9, 1878, Col. 4, p. 4.

Deniz Firincioğlu

BEAUTY AND THE PURSUIT OF MEANING

*The god who prophecies at Delphi
neither hints nor conceals his mean-
ing but gives a sign.*

—Herakleitos

I am about to speak of beauty and of how it is the name given to that object which seduces the one who looks upon it, or the one who reads it, to enter the way of pursuing that object's meaning, and of how beauty is beautiful precisely because that meaning is never apprehended in its totality, because the way's end does not ever appear. I am about to define beauty as that which lies silent within the work, and as that which annihilates itself in the very moment of instituting itself before my eyes. I will say that beauty is a self-effacing activity, on the part of the work, as it struggles to continue to hold my gaze, so that I may partake in its perpetually undercut procreation, as it and I pursue the silence, always on the verge of becoming articulate of meaning, and always remaining unable to enter totality's soothing

territory. But everything I will speak will remain inarticulate of that silence, whose only discernible manifestation lies in that art seduces me and I pursue it. Although it wills to yield and I will to know, it and I remain suspended in our respective activities toward each other. That will and that consequent suspension constitute beauty.

The art work whose meaning is readily decodable, discernibly displays an intention and an origin, both of which are contrivances subservient to the regime of totality. That work, by dwelling in theological fixity, understands itself as the articulation, by the thinking subject, of the world-system's prior meaning. Art is a graceful tool in that world, as is language, and a means of attaining and articulating, at once and absolutely, the totalizing meaning — of God, Reason, Nature or of any other entity that benefits from capitalization.

Against this regime of meaning can be located a source of aesthetic pleasure which is generated by the suspension, despite the inevitable pursuit by way of hints and traces in the art work, of any inherent referent whatsoever. Meaning resides in the space between the work and the subject's gaze to which no world, meaning, thought is exterior. What befalls the instance of meaning glimpsed for a brief moment, given that the genius of the artistic sign is not only its self-institution in the eyes of the subject or its speaking to the latter, but is also its instantaneous self-effacement, as a meaningful sign, is that the previous instance of referentiality is displaced. The sign's action as such is a displacing action, a yielding its place perpetually to an other, in order to structure and modify itself in the other's name. The meaningful moment receives its place from the sign, yet is not there in that place since its place is occupied by the sign. It does not precede and substantiate the sign but it itself is generated and attributed with momentary substantiality by the engenderment which is the sign. Every instance of meaning is the perpetual presence of an other which takes over. Every moment of the sign under the subject's gaze is a specific nonsignificance. Yet in the process of being pursued by the subject, it is continuously indexed and modified. That is the irresistible load of the sign: so insignificantly being and being made into a meaning, powerless to resist both the being and the being made. The sign is its inability to abolish being one: in both senses of 'one,' nothing in particular yet one.

In part, the sign speaks, and in part it is of that which it cannot speak. The subject hears the spoken, in part, and in part, although it apprehends the silence, it cannot know the silence. The speechlessness of the sign, and the unknowable for the subject, is that which resists signification. The speakable is spoken and appears in the very spoken, in the form of what does not appear. That which haunts is the present and presence, but inversely so. The authentically representative presence of the sign in an authentic present is an impossibility. Authentic representation is a

paradox, and, in the last analysis, the only presence is that of the naked sign, and its present value is but a virtual gap, between its previous and approaching values, inhabited by the sign. But the sign appears as continuous and self-same. The subject's memory of the sign's having been, enables him continuously to re-experience the sign of the past from the future. The sign's signification is nothing but the moment of signification. Every such moment is in the subject, in the manner of the sign's constituting itself, for the sake of the instances of signification to come. Every such moment is displaced by another, while retaining, in the subject, enough hints of itself to maintain continuity. The hints are the sign's speech and constitute its repertory of articulation. The subject pursues the sign's course, not in order to transcend it, but in the desire of letting it speak, so that silence may be attained. The course is pursued so that it may release silence.

The mortality of the sign and its meaning is the case since the sign breaks the silence of the blank canvas, of the empty space and of the white paper, on whose grounds it executes itself. Execute, in both senses of the word: to practice and to kill. Between violating silence and the violence of silence, always ready to appear, the work of art occurs as the mortal mode of art's being.

The installation of meaning by the subject is for the sake of the discursive practice in which the sign lends itself to the subject for formation. This installation lets happen the drive, on the part of the subject to pursue, and on the part of the sign to further lend itself to signification. The work needs the subject in unceasing dialogue so that it may mean something.

Since beauty does not seek to immediately denote a referent, dictated by a totalizing central entity, prior and exterior to the sign, it renders unnecessary the grammatical, the propositional and the figurative. The latter lend themselves not to reading but to interpretation. Beauty rejects interpretation and arouses pure thought in unspeakability and interpretative resignation.

Karsten Harries

THE PURSUIT OF PRESENCE IN MODERN ART

In an interview with Bruce Glaser, Frank Stella described his artistic goals in the following words:

...I always get into arguments with people who want to retain the old values in painting — the humanistic values that they always find on the canvas. If you pin them down, they always end up asserting that there is something there besides the paint on the canvas. My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen *is* there. It really is an object. Any painting is an object and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever it is that he's doing. He is making a thing. All that should be taken for granted. If the painting were lean enough, accurate enough, or right enough, you would just be able to look at it. All I want to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of

them, is the fact that you can see the whole idea without confusion. . . . What you see is what you see.¹

Distancing himself from what he calls "the humanistic values" of a more traditional approach to painting, Stella projects the ideal of an art that would force us just to look at it, that would not allow us to "avoid the fact that it's supposed to be entirely visual."² The spectator is to be reduced to a pure eye, the painting to a pure visual presence.

Stella's statement is hardly an isolated remark, just as his art is not an effort in isolation, but has its firm place in a development that, haunted by the ideal of presence, tends toward the self-negation of art. In this paper I would like to show the logic of this development and exhibit some of its presuppositions.³

In an essay that appeared in 1912 in the *Blaue Reiter Almanach* Kandinsky predicted that in the future art would develop along two divergent lines: a movement towards abstraction would be complemented by a new realism. Both movements were said to have their origin in a rejection of the traditional demand that form be used to order representation and representation to give content to form. On Kandinsky's view traditional art can be understood as the product of a dialogue between the artist and the world. The artist imposes a form on reality, not in order to conquer, but to reveal it.

Consider Meindert Hobbema's *The Avenue, Middelhamis*. We see a typical Dutch landscape. An old photograph shows how faithful the painter was to what he saw. Yet Hobbema gives us more than a representation of a landscape. The painting also has a formal, Mondrian-like quality, created by the interplay of verticals and horizontals. Our sense of order is strengthened by the symmetry of the composition — note, for example, the way the church-spire on the left answers to the farmhouse on the right — and by the converging lines of the avenue, the water-filled ditches bordering it, and the receding rows of trees, which seem to make this almost a case-study in perspective. The formal order helps to reveal the essence of this landscape and of its inhabitants as no more literal representation could. Yet, not all is tidy and

¹Bruce Glaser, "Questions to Stella and Judd," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1968), pp. 157-158.

²Ibid., p. 158.

³Parts of this paper appear also, but in a different context, in "The Painter and the Word," forthcoming in the *Bennington Review*. See also "Das befreite Nichts," *Durchblicke*. Martin Heidegger zum 80. Geburtstag (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1970), pp. 39-62.

neat. The more time we spend on the painting, the more aware we become of the many ways in which order is violated. The scrawny trees do not quite keep to the vertical. Their subtle deviations hint at the distance that separates life from geometry. The uncertain furrows and lines of the avenue show that neither men nor beasts like to travel in straight lines. The authority of the central avenue is challenged by the road turning off to the right and by the smaller path beckoning us towards the dark grove on the left, rendered mysterious by its curious perspective.

But perhaps enough has been said to show that the beauty of a painting such as this is inseparable from the subtle balance of form and representation. If Kandinsky is right, the modern artist no longer strives for such balance.

And it seems today that one no longer finds a goal in this ideal, that the lever which holds the balance pans of the scale has disappeared and that both balance pans intend to lead their existence separately, as self-contained units, independent of each other. . . . On the one hand the diverting support of the objective is taken away from the abstract, and the observer feels himself floating in the air. One says: art is losing its footing. On the other hand, the diverting idealization in the abstract (the "artistic" element) is taken away from the objective, and the observer feels nailed to the floor. One says: art is losing its ideal.⁴

Two new ideas take the place of the old: on the one hand we have the ideal of an art that reduces the representational element to a minimum in order to let form speak more clearly; on the other hand we have the ideal of an art that reduces the formal element to a minimum in order to let things speak for themselves. In the future, Kandinsky predicted, a great abstraction would stand beside a great realism. Kandinsky saw his own art as tending towards the former, that of Henri Rousseau as tending towards the latter.

That Kandinsky saw something essential is suggested by the fact that Werner Haftmann could use Kandinsky's schema to interpret the whole of modern art.

Reviewing the period just analysed, which essentially covers The First World War and a few years after it, we find that it was marked by two symbolic acts of profound significance. Both went beyond "art"; both were spontaneous expressions of a state of mind composed of irony and despair, and in their spontaneity, both defined unconscious longings of the epoch. The first act was performed by Duchamp, when he chose an object at random and placed it in a strange environment as an image of the Other, whose accidental, but very material presence invested it with the very unrealistic dignity of a magic thing, a fetish. In

⁴Wassily Kandinsky, "On the Problem of Form," in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 161.

this act the modern experience of the object was defined as the experience of the magical Other. The second act was performed by Malevich, when, in order to define in the most rigorous manner the opposite of the world of natural appearance, he declared a black square on a white ground to be a painting. . . . The two acts, as we have just said, have nothing to do with "art"; they were demonstrations, they marked off the frontiers of art as two opposite poles of human experience — the absolute thing and the absolute form, the reality of nature and the reality of man.⁵

Haftmann thus adopts Kandinsky's map of modern art, opposing a great realism to a great abstraction, only that for him Duchamp takes the place of Henri Rousseau, while Malevich takes the place of Kandinsky. It should be noted that according to Haftmann creations like Duchamp's *Bottle-rack* or Malevich's *Black Square*, while marking the limits of modern art, are themselves no longer "art" in the usual sense. This is to say, when we arrive at the limits of modern art we have left "art" behind. And since, according to Haftmann, modern art does not dwell securely between these borders, but is said to continuously push towards them, modern art would seem to be governed by the project of overcoming itself as art.

What does "art" mean here? If we identify art with traditional art as Kandinsky understands it, creations like Duchamp's ready-mades and Malevich's black on white compositions can indeed no longer be considered art. But must we do so? When does art cease to be art?

In the *Critique of Judgment* Kant offers the following minimal definition of art: "By right we ought only to describe as art, production through freedom, i.e., through a will that places reason at the basis of its actions."⁶ The definition is obviously too broad: it covers not only works of fine art, but all products of human making, pots and pans as well as paintings and poems. And yet it makes an important point that helps Kant to distinguish artificial from natural beauty.

In order to judge of a natural beauty as such, I need not have beforehand a concept of what sort of thing the object is to be; i.e. I need not know its material purposiveness (the purpose), but its mere form pleases by itself in the act of judging it without any knowledge of the purpose. But if the object is given as a product of art and as such is to be declared beautiful, then, because art always supposes a purpose in the cause (and its causality), there must be at bottom in the first instance a concept of what the thing is to be.⁷

⁵Werner Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 203.

⁶Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, tr. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), par. 43, p. 145.

⁷Ibid., par. 48, p. 154.

Art, Kant insists, is essentially the realization of a purpose or of an intention. To approach some object as a work of art is to presuppose such an intention. This is to say that works of art, when seen as art, can never simply "be there," but always refer us beyond themselves to a governing intention. Art remains art only as long as it makes intended meaning visible; it ceases to be art when it loses its meaning.

Even on this minimal definition, which does not enable us to distinguish works of art from other products of human making, it seems that art has become a burden to the modern artist. Consider the works of Stella or Judd. Much of the art of the last two decades is no longer supposed to mean, but rather to be simply present. What confers presence is, according to Clement Greenberg, "the look of non-art."⁸ "Presence" has become one of the favorite terms in discussions of recent art and as it is used it would seem to deny meaning. Stella's art, as he himself insists, is thus supposed to be "entirely visual." There should be nothing besides paint on canvas. Thus when Stella rejects the old "humanistic values" of art, he not only rejects a particular form of art, but an essential characteristic of all art. Kant is right to point out that every art object cannot but refer the observer to something other than itself, to a meaning. It can thus be understood as meaning becomes visible. To such art Stella tries to oppose the ideal of a very different art, an art that no longer has the look of art, whose objects would be simply present, as an old rusty nail or a bright pebble do not mean, but are simply there. Stella's paintings or Donald Judd's sculptures are not supposed to mean, but simply to be. But while we can grant that these objects are no longer supposed to mean anything, do they really lack all meaning? Can they lack all meaning? Not if, as I suggested, Kant is right when he claims that we refer any object seen as the creation of man back to the intention of him who created it. All human creation has a meaning. Thus this art, intended to look like non-art, looks like art after all, in spite of the intention. Stella seems to suspect this. For he does not claim that his painting succeeds in being entirely visual. What he says is somewhat different: "I also want my painting to be so you can't *avoid* the fact that it's supposed to be entirely visual." But this is to admit that even his art communicates an intention. It tells us what it is supposed to be. And in this it succeeds. Thus it has a meaning. It means to be entirely visual.

Why this fascination with presence? Why this refusal of more traditional meanings? To approach these questions, let us return to Kandinsky's thesis and ask: what does it mean to reduce the representational element to a minimum? Had this reduction not been accomplished by Kandinsky himself when he painted his lyrical abstraction *Improvisation*? But in what sense are these *Improvisations*

⁸Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," in *Minimal Art*, p. 185.

abstract? The work of art here refers beyond itself in a quite obvious way: colors and forms remind us of things we have seen and felt. While we are not given definite representations of man or nature, what we see is unmistakably human or natural. If we don't see the familiar world, we yet see its traces. This art still says something; it still has a content, even if that content is left deliberately indefinite. The work of art retains an aura of traditional meaning; it still presupposes the meanings of the world.

It was just this that led Malevich to his more traditional abstraction. The decision is made to eliminate these traces of the world and to turn to the square as to the most abstract form and to white and black as the most abstract colors. "Abstract" here means not only non-representational, but free from all associations, particular feelings and emotions that tie us to our world. As Albers was to do later, Malevich chose the square because it has no physiognomy, because it is in that sense uninteresting and precisely because of this more purely present. Interest stands in the way of presence.

Of course, in his pursuit of abstraction and presence, the artist need not turn to the square. A hard, mechanically produced line is less interesting and in this sense more abstract than a line that suggests handwriting; regular forms are more abstract than irregular ones; simple wholes are more abstract than composite wholes. Similarly an unbroken primary color says less and is therefore more abstract than a deep blue green, hinting at emeralds and tropical water, or a golden orange. Malevich calls the square the key to a new art precisely because of its simplicity which says almost nothing and just because of this lets it be all there. This new art is to be simply present; it is not to represent or in some sense have a meaning.

But once again; why this attempt to eliminate meaning? Malevich's own answer bears out Haftmann's suggestion that such art has its origin in "a state of mind composed of irony and despair." Anticipating Camus, Malevich speaks of a conflict between man's demands for meaning and the opaque silence of the world, a conflict which, if we are to believe Malevich, again and again has led man to veil this silence with his illusions, be they the illusions of religion, of traditional art, or of science. Today, Malevich suggests, these illusions have begun to show themselves for what they are, man's own creations, and when recognized as such, unable to sustain him. The disintegration of the old value system once again lets us hear the surrounding silence. And yet, this silence is oppressive only as long as we continue to demand meaning. It is from this vain demand that Malevich wanted to liberate us, thus enabling us to accept the world as it presents itself to us. The pursuit of presence is to lead us beyond nihilism.

To the traditional idea of life as a vocation Malevich opposes his own ideal of a white mankind. "The consciousness of this mankind," he tells us, "is non-objective."⁹

Man exists in his sense non-objectively when he no longer needs objects, and precisely because of this is free to let them be what they are. This freedom from need is opposed to the more usual sense of freedom as freedom to do what one wants to do. This freedom seems questionable to Malevich because it leaves man with the question: what am I to do? As long as we take this question seriously, we remain tied to the world, demanding meaning and suffering from its absence. Such suffering is overcome only when we stop to ask for meaning. "By creative activity, I understand free expression, an activity that raises no questions. Questions belong to the province of the inventor, not to that of the creator. Freedom exists only where there are neither questions nor answers."¹⁰

What Malevich here calls freedom is indistinguishable from a natural spontaneity that has freed itself from deliberate doing. Malevich dreams of an existence that is no longer burdened by the demand for meaning. He knows that to fulfill this dream we have to take leave from the familiar world. We must learn to let things be, to encounter them without asking anything of them. Yet we are so used to our world, that we have to be transported by the artist into a strange and cooler environment, the white world of suprematism. The key to this world is the white square which is to silence all meanings and expectations of meaning.

The simple white square is a limit of modern art which Malevich thinks, but does not try to mark with a particular work. His black on white compositions already represent a further step: the silence has been broken. Geometrical shapes announce their presence. And precisely because the *Black Square* and the *Black Circle* have so little meaning in the usual sense, they announce their presence more forcefully than the more familiar things of the world, which, because we already know where to place them, are easily overlooked and taken for granted. Because these things have a meaning, because they have their place in our world, their simple presence is not allowed to reveal itself to us. Silence and presence belong together.

But even here, one can argue, there is still too much meaning that obscures presence. Measured by his own program Malevich's suprematist compositions are themselves too traditional. Thus their size remains traditional, as does the relationship of painting to wall. His works continue to be carefully balanced compositions. It is in its new sense of scale and especially in the rejection of compositional effects that Stella and Judd see the most decisive difference between the new American art and European geometric painting with which it invites comparison. As Stella puts the difference:

⁹Kasimir Malewitsch, *Suprematismus - Die gegenstandslose Welt*, tr. Hans von Riesen (Cologne: Dumont, 1962), p. 227.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 116.

... the European geometric painters really strive for what I call relational painting. The basis of their whole idea is balance. You do something in one corner and you balance it with something in the other corner. Now the "new painting" is being characterized as symmetrical. Ken Noland has put things in the center and I'll use a symmetrical pattern, but we use symmetry in a different way. It's nonrelational. In the newer American painting we strive to get the thing in the middle, and symmetrical, but just to get a kind of force, just to get the thing on the canvas. The balance factor isn't important. We're not trying to jockey everything around.¹¹

Kandinsky had rejected an art that had sought beauty in the balance of form and representation. The attack on balance is now carried to composition. Compositional effects are rejected because just as effectively as representation composition refers us beyond the painting to the intention of the composing artist. Judd thus dismisses the Europeans with the suggestion that

All that art is based on systems built beforehand, *a priori* systems; they express a certain type of thinking and logic that is pretty much discredited now as a way of finding out what the world's like.... We recognize that the world is ninety percent chance and accident. Earlier painting was saying that there's more order in the scheme of things than we admit now, like Poussin saying that order underlies nature.¹²

Judd shares Malevich's dream of spontaneous creation beyond deliberate composition and in his case, too, this dream is tied to an inability to understand the world as a meaningful order.

One can go further. The traditional understanding of the work of art as a whole composed of parts can be attacked by dissolving the work of art into parts, e.g., into L-shaped elements that can be put together in different ways; we can try to move away from the traditional two-dimensionality of painting by transforming paintings into slabs, into three-dimensional objects we can touch and grasp, thus blurring the distinction between painting and sculpture; or we can try to eliminate the uniqueness of the work of art by creating an object that is easily reproduced or perhaps by presenting the same object over and over again. But no matter in what direction and how far we go, it is always possible to insist that there is still too much meaning. For we still place such efforts in a tradition and compare it with what we expect art to be. The art of the artist's precursors still forms the background of our understanding and against this background these works become perhaps boring, perhaps interesting departures from the expected, signals calling for a revolt against the tradition.

¹¹ Glaser, p. 149.

¹² Ibid., pp. 151 and 156.

But just because of this they still depend on and derive their meaning from that tradition, and this meaning stands in the way of the desired epiphany of presence. And even more unfortunate, given the search for presence, this art, meant simply to be, strikes us as just this, not simply as being, but as meant to be. It is significant that Haftmann can call Malevich's *Black Square* a symbolic act or a demonstration. Both terms suggest that the artist is trying to make a point. Malevich's *Black on White*, and the same is true of much more recent art, is a rather theatrical gesture that refers beyond itself to the artist's intention and perhaps this intention speaks to us more strongly in the case of one of Malevich's suprematist compositions or a *Stella*, than when we look at Hobbema's *The Avenue, Middelhamis*.

But what is the meaning intended by such art? Malevich's interpretation of his own efforts gave us a first answer. His art gestures towards whiteness, towards the void. His *Black Square* has nothing for its meaning. But this is not to say that it has no meaning. The following remark by Malevich makes this quite clear:

But there is no icon on which the holy is zero. The essence of God is zero salvation. In this essence lies at the same time salvation zero.... If the heroes and saints were to become aware that the salvation of the future is zero-salvation they would be confused by reality. The hero would let his sword drop and the prayers of the saint would die on his lips.¹³

Malevich's suprematist compositions are icons that establish zero as the holy. They are the prayers of a modern saint whose God has dissolved into nothing. Finding his world incapable of providing real purpose, man turns to the void, making it his purpose.¹⁴ Beauty becomes the epiphany of presence in silence.

So far I have said very little about the other limit of modern art mentioned by Kandinsky and, following him, by Haftmann, about the great realism. A very similar analysis applies. It, too, is engaged in the pursuit of presence. Once again this pursuit demands that the artist leave the familiar world and its meanings behind. Usually things receive their meaning from the contexts in which they stand and operate. A snow shovel thus receives its meaning from the activities that involve its use. To know the meaning of something is to know its place in our world. Such knowledge leads us all too often to take things for granted. Just the things that are closest to us, for instance the shoes we are wearing or the chair on which we are sitting, are usually only half noticed; often they call themselves to our attention only

¹³Malewitsch, p. 57.

¹⁴See Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*.

when something isn't quite right. We are too busy in the world to see things as they are. Their appearance is veiled by the expected. To really see them we must free ourselves from the everyday and its perspectives, step back from the world and look again, as if we had not seen it before. To lead us to take this step is one task of art.

But is art in the traditional sense still up to this task? Has it not itself become part of the established and therefore taken for granted? Walk through a museum or an exhibition: most visitors take note of, but do not take the time to really look at, pictures. How quickly we are finished with a work of art. And those little signs that tell us the name of a painting and who painted it and when often do not help us to see, although they are of help to those who come to a museum to look at, let us say, the only Bosch in New England. Many of us come to museums with some mental map of art that has a place for what we are to see. In this sense we have already taken care of whatever we are going to encounter. Too often we look at a work of art just long enough to assign it a place on that map. We see it and check it off. Once this is done we can speak of it intelligently.

It was this growing accustomed to art that Kandinsky tried to combat. "The spirit has absorbed" traditional art, he insisted, and now can find in it "no new food."¹⁵ Art here means an art that sought beauty in the balance of representation and form. Because this particular conception of art had come to be taken for granted, the artist had to turn against it, had to create an art that judged by the accepted and expected might have to be judged deficient. Deficiency here functions as an antidote to beauty that has become a cliché. Again it is the step into the unknown that liberates us and lets us see.

It is just in this way that Haftmann understands Duchamp's ready-mades. Some familiar object, a snow shovel or a bottle-rack for example, is taken out of its familiar place, is displaced. Some familiar object—this is to say that there is no good reason why the artist should have picked just this particular thing. If some critics continue to find Duchamp's *Bottlerack* beautiful in a quite traditional sense, this may show no more than this gesture is too weak to set them free. Dada was for Duchamp a weapon to attack clichés. A cliché is an expression that we have come to take for granted, whose original meaning has grown mute through countless repetitions. For Duchamp all art tended to reduce to Dada, because the established order in its entirety was thought to have degenerated into a collection of clichés. Duchamp would not have denied that this order still assigns us our place, but he would have asked whether it provides more than an illusion based on a willingness to accept clichés as the only available ground. We have now come somewhat closer to the meaning of Haftmann's statement, that the two gestures that define the limits of modern art have their foundation in a state of mind composed of irony and

¹⁵Kandinsky, p. 161, note.

despair. Both are responses to the splintering and disintegration of the traditional value system that leaves the world a collection of meaningless facts veiled by clichés.

Against Duchamp, too, one may object that he remains too tied to tradition. Like the suprematist compositions of Malevich, his ready-mades are gestures directed against the established and accepted. Duchamp himself spoke of provocation. But to be provocative a work of art requires an audience that takes for granted that art has certain boundaries. Consider Duchamp's once notorious *Fountain*. Measured by Kandinsky's idea of a great realism, this work is a failure. For only as long as work shocks and provokes us, does it remain interesting. Thus it is parasitic on already established meanings. The emancipation from all meaning demanded by the great realism has not taken place. Duchamp's *Bottle-rack* or Jasper John's *Painting with Ruler and Grey* comes clear to fulfilling this demand. It is instructive to compare Jasper John's painting with a more traditional *Merz-Oval* by Kurt Schwitters. In the Schwitters we find all the compositional qualities that Judd and Stella found so objectionable in the work of a painter like Vasarely. The artist appears to be firmly in control. In Jasper John's painting the artist's materials, the grey paint and the ruler, seem to have gotten away from him. The various elements of the composition, if we can still call it that, fail to form an organized whole; they are simply there. The paint asserts itself as paint; the ruler refuses to submit to the composition and remains a ruler, a quite ordinary measuring device, yet never before seen in this way. We can speak here of a *realism of materials*, which could be contrasted with the more traditional *realism of representation*, were it not for the fact that this realism of materials depends on re-presentation in the most literal sense of the word. Painter and ruler are re-presented objects. This re-presentation brings with it a dislocation that reveals paint as paint, ruler as ruler. The artist's materials, for instance paint and canvas, or a ruler, or a bottle-rack, are the real subject-matter of this art. Refusing to reduce his materials to a mere instrument to communicate some meaning, the artist lets them be what they are. As a result they become, to use Haftmann's phrase, a magical other. What is magical is their opaque and yet strangely insistent presence.

Given a work like Jasper Johns' *Painting with Ruler and Grey*, it is difficult to decide whether we should speak of extreme realism or extreme abstraction. Kandinsky's two paths seem to lead to one goal. Thus Barbara Rose in her much noted article on "ABC Art" points out that many of its creations can be understood as a synthesis of the work of Malevich and Duchamp.

In 1913, Kasimir Malevich, placing a black square on a white ground that he identified as the "void," created the first suprematist composition. A year later, Marcel Duchamp exhibited as an original work of art a standard metal bottle-rack,

which he called a "ready-made." For half a century, these works marked the limits of visual art. Now, however, it appears that a new generation of artists, who seem not so much inspired as impressed by Malevich and Duchamp (to the extent that they venerate them), are examining in a new context the implications of their radical decisions. Often the results are a curious synthesis of the two men's work. That such a synthesis should not only be possible but likely is clear in retrospect.¹⁶

I hope that it has indeed become clear. Duchamp's ready-mades are in the most literal sense re-presentations. In this sense what I have termed the realism of materials is more obviously re-presentational than any traditional realism had ever been. This re-presentation destroys the usual environment of such objects. By displacing them it renders them meaningless and abstract.

And similarly, when abstraction is carried to extremes, as for example in the works of Jasper Johns or Donald Judd, when the work has been reduced to its materials, what we are left with are simply objects. I should add that this synthesis had been foreseen by Kandinsky:

Thus we finally see: if in the great realism reality appears strikingly large and the abstract strikingly small, and if in the great abstraction this relation seems to be reversed, in the last analysis (=aim) these two poles equal each other. Between these antipodes the sign of equality can be placed.

Realism = Abstraction

Abstraction = Realism.¹⁷

The limit and final goal of modern art, at least if we understand it as Kandinsky and Haftmann do, is indicated by the ideal of an art that no longer means, but is simply present. The objecthood of the object becomes a leading concern.

There are those who consider minimal art not pure enough, who in the name of presence reject the emphasis on objecthood. Michael Fried thus has criticized artists like Donald Judd or Robert Morris for their affirmation of the objecthood of the object, which, Fried suggests, is opposed to modernist painting's self-imposed imperative that it defeat or suspend "its own objecthood through the medium of shape," an imperative that he would extend to all the arts.¹⁸ The imperative can be

¹⁶Barbara Rose, "A B C Art," *Minimal Art*, p. 275.

¹⁷Kandinsky, p. 162.

¹⁸Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Minimal Art*, p. 136.

shown to be little more than a corollary of Kant's claim that aesthetic experience centers on the form of the object, not on its existence. Kant's *Critique of Judgment* remains the most suggestive analysis of the aesthetic sensibility that underlies the pursuit of presence. By pushing that analysis to its last consequence Fried lets us see more clearly what motivates that pursuit.

The authentic art of our time, according to Fried, aspires to presentness.¹⁹ The choice of the term "presentness" rather than "presence" is significant in that it suggests not only a rejection of representation and meaning, but beyond that an attack on the temporality of the aesthetic experience. If the work of art is to be all there, if nothing is to be absent and lacking, it must be such as to place the observer beyond memory and expectation, beyond hope and fear, beyond interest and boredom. "It is this continuous and entire presentness, amounting, as it were, to the perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of *instantaneousness*: as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a single brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it."²⁰ Fried points to paintings by Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski, to sculptures by David Smith and Anthony Caro. The visual arts provide the most obvious examples, although Fried suggests that there is poetry and music that similarly lets time stand still "because *at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest*."²¹

Measured by this ideal of presentness Fried finds most minimal art wanting because too theatrical. "Theatre and theatricality" are said to be "at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such, with modernist sensibility as such."²² Why this opposition to the theatre? The answer to the question is the same as to the question: Why must modernist art seek to defeat the objecthood of the object? The interaction between observer and performance takes time. Similarly the encounter with a sculpture by Judd or Morris takes time. We interact with it. It arouses our interest, invites us to explore it, to step forward or to walk around it. The quality of the experience is such that we are forced to acknowledge its temporality. If we accept Fried's characterization of modernist sensibility, that sensibility is born of what Nietzsche called the spirit of revenge: the will's ill will against time. In the spirit of revenge the pursuit of presence has its deepest root.

In conclusion I would like to question the claim that the authentic art of our time aspires to presentness. This is not to deny that what Fried calls the authentic art of our time does manifest a characteristically modern aesthetic sensibility. The

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 146 and 147.

pursuit of presence has been a leading theme, perhaps even the leading theme of the development of modern art. But the word "authentic" carries evaluative implications. It suggests an imperative: the modern artist should dedicate himself to this pursuit. I do not have time here to subject that pursuit to a fullscale critique. But perhaps what I have said here has hinted at the direction such a critique would take. The pursuit of presence is born of the dream of an art that would let time stand still. But for us time cannot stand still. The more single-minded the artist pursues presence, the more he will seek to move beyond reality, beyond man, beyond art.

"Presentness," writes Fried, "is grace."²³ The art object is reduced to no more than an occasion for an experience that is to let us forget that we have to exist in time, facing an uncertain future; modern man turns to such art to discover here a fleeting substitute for an existence beyond time in which he can no longer believe. If presentness is indeed grace, then grace is denied to man. This denial demands an art that is not afraid of the theatre.

20 *ibid.*, p. 146.

21 *ibid.*, p. 145.

22 *ibid.*, p. 139.

23 *ibid.*, p. 147.

Charles Bernstein and S.B. Laufer

MEANING THE MEANING ARAKAWA'S CRITIQUE OF SPACE

Arakawa's paintings have as their subject matter the nature of meaning. They are investigative and constructive, although the construction that is the work is necessarily the manifestation of the investigation. That investigation pertains to the visual field and takes as its primary tools basic visual structuring modalities such as perspective, figuration, color, and plane and solid geometry. Arakawa deals with the visual field as discourse, modal systems that constitute the world rather than being constituted by it. In this sense, his work is neither a reconstruction of a given visual reality or an ontologically autonomous, "pure," formalism. Rather, it is a project of inquiry, in which the dialogic and inquisitive become an architecture of visual thinking.

Arakawa's procedure is a philosophical one, but this is not to say that he incorporates philosophical issues into his work in a literary manner. This work involves a systematic rethinking of the philosophical project, specifically in dealing with philosophical problems not as verbal entities but as visual ones. For Arakawa, the act or experience of seeing is an act or experience of language. Language, in this view, cannot be thought of only as a verbal, word-bound system but is equally involved with the construction and mediation of visual seeing and of space. While he is interested in relating some of the results of this work to the verbal/conceptual mapping of traditional philosophy, for example in some of the texts interfused into the paintings, his primary mode of investigation is into the nature of the visual perception/constitution of objects and of space, and the types of associations these processes bring about under various atmospheres or textures.

In Arakawa's work the consistent use of superimposed written texts becomes a system for determining (constructing) visual space, at the same time defining a textual space (literally inside the paintings) and commenting on and critiquing the other spaces within the painting. The placement of writing, which forms internal captions, suggests that the canvas is to be seen as a page and, indeed, that all marks on these canvases are to be seen as inscriptions. Whereas artists generally separate out linguistic meaning from their visual work in the form of titles or captions, allowing these alone to bear the verbal weight, Arakawa combines comments, philosophical references, imperatives, mottos, and morals into his pieces. This presence of words cannot be explained only by a desire for establishing correlations to more standard philosophical discourse but also by a deeper conviction that neither the verbal nor visual realms are self-sufficient, and that this schism or dualism is an underlying problem within Western thought and art. As a result, a verbal equivalent or explication of the visual component is always included and, in fact, the viewer is never allowed to be alone with the purely visual elements of the work.

In the early canvases (1963-72), the words are frontally placed. However, in the more recent paintings, such as "Or Air" (1973-74), words are used more actively as a counterpoint to linear and coloristic elements and as an increasingly complex layering device within the structure of the painting. As the lexical units become more difficult to decipher, their qualities as lettrist elements, that is, as visual forms, is foregrounded, so that the more functionless the language the more force it has as a recurring artifact. This geometry of gesture formed by the use of words becomes a motif integrated into the painting along with other recurrent elements such as fans, drips, splashes, dots, arrows, spins, tubes, arcs/circles, and crystalline dodecahedrons.

In the 1967 painting "Landscape," a rainbow-colored line runs horizontally across the upper portion of the canvas, with the phrase (which also occurs in some

of the other paintings) "A LINE IS A CRACK" written directly above it: the line is an horizon in the way language itself is an horizon, containing the field of possible meanings from which any given of the world emerges. "A line is a crack": a crack in the sense of allowing a glimpse of something through it—a crack of light, a crack in the door—but also a fissure, a break of an expanse or field, a cut. A line not only dividing the visual field but also in this process containing spatial areas, making figures, inscribing the recurrent tubes ("moral volumes" of a projected interior/subjective space as in "Tubes, 1965" and the 1979 "Study for 'I' "). A bounding by dividing that is always the genesis of meaning in language, allowing for demarcation, the creation of territories, objects, values—played out by Arakawa in the visual dimension. But also, the inscription of language onto the visual field as literal fact of seeing through words. So, for example, a line of poetry breaking at measured pace the totality of the text; therefore, using Arakawa's equation, the crack as measure.

Arakawa's lines do not simply contain; his tubes rapidly swirl into "self contradicting spins" that open up and rebind in spiralling motion, making outside of inside, or visibly confounding, refuting, this separation. For Arakawa, figuration is not a static given but rather always an activity, a motion; his lines do not so much contain or describe as potentiate ("hypostatization," a recurrent word in Arakawa's vocabulary, means the act of construing a conceptual entity as actually existing). This investigation of the bounding potential of lines involves the nature of the person, of individualized space, and as such is a critique of the metaphysical idea of the separateness of "moral volumes" as an inherent fallacy within the Cartesian grid system of rationalized space. It is simultaneously an analagous inquiry involving the nature of individuation itself—whether of objects, categories, or persons. That the critique is conducted here in spatial terms illustrates how this philosophical inquiry is primarily a visual one and not simply an appropriation of verbal conceptions into the visual realm.

The inscription of bounded space, a pervasive issue in the work, dates back to the early "floor plan" paintings which diagram the interior spaces of houses. The images in "Tubes, 1965" are particularly central in this respect and versions of them constantly recur in other paintings. The painting consists of three labeled figures—"tube" (a diagrammatic cylinder), "twisted tube" (the paradigm for the later "spins"), and "broken tube" (opening up into the blankness of space). The painting is a parable on the nature of ego conceived as a spatial ontology. The twist, by turning "inner" space "out," involves a play with the materiality of spatial depths—inside/out, the dynamic focus of energy and movement, elaborated on in the many vortex-like "spins" in the paintings. As Arakawa puts it, "Angular spin: generating a sense of in (out) out (in): also (a sense of) depth."

The spins, defining an interior or subjective space, suggest that the self is less a metaphysical reality than a visual construction. They form a compelling image,

seeming to construct a model of self as contained yet expanding. Often spins are shown that contain within a larger spin a smaller turning form. They map out possibilities, loci, of expansion—the linear determinates of a projection outward to the space of the canvas.

“The vortex is the maximum point of energy” as Pound defines it in one of his vorticist manifestos. Arakawa writes of spins, “sucking passage (omni-directional): a group of vortexes (high and low etc.),” “as if broken tubes: passageways: tunneling volumes of degrees,” “dome within tunnel.” Vortices are also a central notion in Cartesian physics, “the innumerable circular motions of (roughly) whirlpools in the continuous fluid of the universe,” as Bernard Williams defines them. Indeed, given that Arakawa’s work represents a fundamental rethinking of Descartes, it is worth noting this point shared in the two systems.

Descartes laid down the foundations of analytic geometry believing further that physics could be explained in purely geometric terms. The Cartesian geometric system, with its coordinate/grid system with 2 or 3 axes, attempted to rationalize space into extensions of length, breadth, and depth. As such, it became the normative view of space and is largely reflected in traditional theories of perspective and volume.

In this respect, it is interesting to note the banishing of space as an active issue in philosophy since Descartes’ rationalization of it in his analytic geometry and its subsequent takeover by the technical sciences. (Space: unbounded extension in all directions, or any portion or limit of extension; position, placement/displacement, site, field, territory, horizon, region, landscape, situation, room; originally a verb for roaming, wandering about, moving.) This banishment of space left philosophy primarily concerned with time and its extension history, where not simply concerned with the timeless and spaceless issues of the mathematical-cum-analytic realm. Indeed, it is the Idealist critique of analysis that gave rise to a concept of history that completely annexed language and meaning, in this way emptying language of its spatial dimensions and leaving space as a neutral or passive territory — prehistory, natural — on which history and language act. This devaluation of space is most recently evident in semiotic/structural theory, and accounts for its inability to deal with the concreteness of particulars, instead dematerializing them into a realm of deep structure underlying all historical manifestations. The “arbitrariness” of the sign is a view predicated on the exclusion of the body as an object *in* space as well as time. But, as Arakawa demonstrates, the logic of space, as much as time, is not an analytic logic but a material one and its critique is fully as central to epistemology. One can also think, in this regard, of Braudel’s geographic studies, or recent architectural research into inner spaces by Peter Eisenman, or the work of many land and site/environmental artists.

The tradition of modernist painting has, of course, been concerned with space, with the Cubist critique of illusionist space a central example, even though an aspect of this tradition has been the effacing of any illusion of spatial depth in the flat, pure opticality of many formalist paintings. Arakawa's work has involved going back to Cubism and extending its critique of space into quite different areas, including both an analytic and synthetic component. This extension can be seen in his insistence that his work is a "mapping," a word that emphasizes a geographic dimension to a spatial preoccupation, although this mapping is more a production of space (as meaning) than a recording of it. Arakawa's more recent tendency to talk of the work as preparatory to a "model of mind," an eventual larger-scale construction in three (or more) dimensions, to be collaborated on with Madeleine Gins and others, suggests that the mind is a geographic entity chartable through the mapping of the mechanisms of meaning.

Arakawa's critique of the Cartesian system of space involves the use of different, seemingly competing, systems of visual organization within the same work. While Cartesian geometry proposed a single, monologic approach in its rationalization of space, Arakawa exhibits a polylogic approach linking contradictory visual structuring mechanisms. Each of these systems sets up the expectation that it will govern the overall composition, but dominance of a single visual system of organization is far from Arakawa's method. He does not, however, simply juxtapose systems. Rather, he has realized a simultaneity involving the synthesis of these partialities into a total viewing experience that cannot be parsed into its parts — a work whose procedure involves analyses into competing systems that are shown to exist in chordal relations to one another.

This synthesis is achieved in two different ways. In *The Mechanism of Meaning*, a book written in collaboration with Gins, the individual panels are swatches of discrete design and the simultaneity takes place at the level of the book as a whole, that is, serially. This serial simultaneity is also relevant to the paintings before 1972, each of which is concerned with a particular modality or genre of visual ideology or organization. Thus we are presented with examples, artifactualized specimens, of the different atmospheres or "scales" or "textures" of meaning that suggest the range of possible modes — swatches of perspective, grids, cubist analytic and synthetic space, diagrammed optical illusions, maps and charts, constructive hypostasizing, geometric abstraction, modified abstract expressionist elements (all over fields, linear layered surfaces, erasure, bleeding, drips), conceptual ideations, the variety of decorative surfaces. In this multi-discourse art, any style, any technique, can seemingly be included into the investigative cataloguing.

After 1972, Arakawa subsumes these different modes of visual discourse into each one of his large-scale paintings. These paintings convey the sense of a

panorama unfolding, unfurling. The scale is so immense that the eye cannot behold the entire work from one vantage point, and the viewer is overcome by a sensation of vista; these paintings have become the horizons that Arakawa earlier spoke of. Embodying overlapping and undercutting patterns, systems, and spins, as well as vectors of intersection and curtailment, the canvas becomes a giant vortex, inducing the vertigo of not being able to find a regular centric footing. Yet this feeling is counterposed by the remarkable stillness and containment in the crystalline accuracy of composition, so that, in painting terms, the slowness and pointedness of the gestural turnings from one system to another suggest the ancient rhythm of Noh drama. "There is only one atmosphere" is Arakawa's statement of the unitary vision behind the diversity of his techniques.

"Within a moment of distance there will be two or three centers" Arakawa writes in one of the 1980 drawings, "Study for Blank." "These shifting centers (up, down, back, forth, from side to side) turn from one to the other. Also turn from one into the other." "Blank" is the inability to see the overall in the absence of a single organizing principle. (This blank corresponds to the blank of the vanishing point in the monologic system of perspective, and of a blind spot in optics.) Arakawa's zen-like jokes in the paintings are also relevant to the concept of blank since their humor often turns on the blank response elicited from a command or question that it is impossible to carry out or answer within the system of discourse in which it is made. Blank is not so much a process of elimination as a confounding by multiplication. Short-term memory experiments show that as few as seven different elements presented simultaneously prevent the image track from taking hold; Arakawa's overdetermination of visual systems produce blank in a similar way. However, for Arakawa, blank is not just a momentary response but rather is an underlying ground or condition against which any meaning figures. By bringing blankness itself into greater visibility, he makes manifest or palpable a quality which is normally transparent.

Arakawa seeks to captivate the viewer on more than one plane, to create a world of objects adrift in space, casting nets over space and forming avenues of passage among them, to and from different layerings of meaning. The results are singular, complexly coordinated paintings in which "linear burps," as Arakawa calls the jumps from system to system, are in a sense the material of the painting, orchestrated with dazzling virtuosity. As Stein wrote of Duchamp: "To interlace a story with glass and with rope with color and roam."

The relentless schematization of Arakawa's drawings of thought recall the notebooks of Da Vinci with his sketches of turbulence and interference in the natural world in the form of vertexes, vortices, spins, and torques. Arakawa brings the intellectual tactility of the artist's notebook into the realm of painting. His dia-

grammatical constructions have a weblike delicacy, with the lacy interweavings forming the parameters of what is made visible.

The pervasive use of a neutral ground in the paintings enables the linear elements to function without background interference. Space (ground, canvas) is frequently left partially empty, allowing for a carefully considered breathing area. Despite its more obvious dissimilarity, Arakawa's work bears some relation, in this respect, to traditional Oriental (Chinese and Japanese) paintings with their extensive use of neutral ground, emphasis on the linear, and the delicacy, precision, and classicism of the placement of lines and color washes. As in such work, the same themes, often captioned by texts, are explored over and over again with changing emphasis on quality of gesture and composition.

Arakawa uses color, in his early work, as an embroidery on black and white, always with a sense of its power and a sparing irony in its application. Color becomes a self-conscious player in these dramas, an example of his precision in articulating the purely visual aspects of the work. In the later paintings, such as "Gasp of Continuity" (1975), washes of neutral, transparent color expand to fill large areas of the canvas, segmenting regions as distinct spatial areas. However, Arakawa generally avoids any solid areas of bright color. In this context, it is interesting to note his frequent coloring of diagrammatic lines, which are set off against a neutral ground.

Arakawa's work shows a technical control, an attention to nuance and intellect, particularly linguistic, that separates it from much of the art of this time. The work is not violently emotional, not purely painterly, not modishly garish. His years of work unroll like a scroll, showing a continuity of evolution and development, of style and presence—a consistency that forms an overwhelming statement of individuality; intelligence, and discernment.

These paintings do not present themselves to the viewer with a meaning or image that can be immediately apprehended, they demand to be read, in the sense of puzzled over, thought about, sifted through. His multi-discourse approach, combining interrogative, witty, and self-reflective texts, brings the viewer into dialogue with each work. As Gins writes, "The viewer should be accustomed to knowing in this case that the painting he is looking at was intended to be something which would one day look at him. No longer only a viewer or spectator, not even a correspondent or witness only, once the activity of regarding has been enjoined, the viewer will become a collaborator and as such either a mediator or an experimenter or both."

In Brecht's definition of epic style, he writes of the spectator not being caught up or emotionally engaged in the action of the play but rather looking at the events critically, assessing the meaning of history as it passes before her or his gaze. This distancing effect is very much at the heart of Arakawa's project. "This distance which

is a texture" is the literalizing Brechtian caption of the recent tube painting discussed earlier ("Study for the 'I', " 1979). In this specific sense, it would not be inappropriate to think of Arakawa's work as epic painting. "Gradually," Gins notes, "the collaborator will realize when spending time with this giant stretched mass, yes, my thinking field is at least this large."

Charles Riley

**SPENGLER'S
ATELIERBRAUN**

*Thou, silent form, doest tease
us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastorall*

*—Keats,
Ode on a Grecian Urn*

Tradition delivers two approaches to the Orpheus-of-the-depths, divergent readings of an identical legend. As the original poet of loss, the tragic Orpheus is the hero of the paradigmatic romance of inspiration, his impulsive accession to desire is the beginning of ethical failure and artistic power. The Orphic “infinite sojourn in death” dramatizes the principal in the heroic eventuality of his sacrifice.¹ The ironic Orpheus is the original genius of self-preservation, the hero of the “romance of interpretation” whose reflexive control of desire is a source of critical power.² In his

¹Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, ed. P. Adams Sitney, tr. Lydia Davis (Barrytown, 1981), p. 102.

denigration of the Orpheus who "is obedient, even when he transgresses"³ Phaedrus takes a dim view of the lover's ability to descend and return unharmed from a confrontation with Eros and Thanatos. The critic gleans his design for understanding from a finite visit among shades, becoming, as Conti observed of his Orpheus, "a man most learned in divinity,"⁴ a connoisseur of the abysmal "negative figure-essence of the object."⁵ The common *desideratum*, the locus from which both Orphic careers diverge, is the impossible origin.

The critical Orpheus conducts his search for the origin along a philological, genealogical or canonic line, the regular continuity of which is his only hope for the return from the depths. In the works of Arnold, Eliot, Frye, Bloom and others the argument progresses on a prescribed outline, with results not quite as architectonic as the *forma tractatus* of Wamerius, and not as adventurously poetic as the *modi tractandi* through which Dante sought to lay claim to the philosophical authority of his work.⁶ However, the profound enigma of the origin can charm critics across the modal boundary into the more inspired extravagances of the rhetoric of the depth-experience, when the ironic Orpheus in momentary wonder stares upon the spectral face of the lyric Orpheus in "the Voids Between the Stars."⁷ These displacements from the schemata of critical positions, these intricate invasions of as, suggest instants of transport from the designated stance of hermeneutical inquiry to the "permanent cold" of the original substance, which must be resigned in the interest of self-preservation.⁸ Two great apostrophic meditations on originality stand at the articulative threshold of mythopoetic contact with the shadows of the essential. Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* brings forth "the new Orpheus" (Socrates) from the dramatic *agon* of Apollo and Dionysus. Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art" draws on the technique of the *mise en scène* in lyrical (Keatsian) "off-the-um"

²Daniel T. O'Hara, "The Romance of Interpretation: A 'Postmodern' Critical Style" *boundary 2*, (Spring 1980), 259-283.

³"Und hergehört, indem er überschreitet." Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus, Number Five*, tr. C.F. MacIntyre (Berkeley, 1961), p. 11.

⁴Natale Conti, *Mythologie*, Book VII, xiv.

⁵My debt to Richard Milazzo's essay "Biconditional Trans-Negligibility" (in Rosemary Mayer, Pontormo's Diary, in collaboration with Richard Milazzo (Milan, 1982)) embraces the use of both "visit" and "the negative figure-essence of the object."

⁶E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 221-225.

⁷William Blake, *Jerusalem*, plate 91, *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, David V. Erdman, ed., *Newly Revised Edition* (Garden City, 1982), p. 251.

⁸Wallace Stevens, "The Rock," *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York, 1923, 1954), p. 528. See J. Hillis Miller, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," *Aesthetics Today*, ed. Morris Phillipson and Paul J. Gudel (New York, 1980), pp. 497-536.

passages such as his critique of the sybilline peasant woman evoked by a Van Gogh painting of a worker's shoes, to illuminate the arena of *aletheia* and set both poet and "preserver" (critic) within its circumference. In a celebrated canonization of one moment of "critical" *ecstasis* which defied the *sparagmos* of pure analytic light, Yeats used a re-arrangement in verse to promote the dark music of Pater's rhapsody on the Gioconda of Leonardo. These are the moments when the meniscus is lost until, turning the instrument, we see the mercury re-ascend the scale, and know that the subliminal declination has been reversed.

Spengler's critical project is ostensibly a circuitous voyage along a revisionist outline of history in quest of the "form-language" for the Modern depth-experience. Whenever he verges on descent from the generic or chronological outline into the absorbing genius of a master (Leonardo, Rembrandt, Goethe, Beethoven), he nears the creation of his own form-language, extravagant in style and often synaesthetic to the exclusion of his own categorical distinctions. The regular premise of his thesis relies upon the continuity of "a universal symbolism" in history-as-Becoming. The fixed trajectory of this totalizing historiography ("The Decline") is belied by ecstatic moments of appreciation which re-direct attention to the Romantic core of his own Faustian aesthetic. While it is true that the most conspicuous aspect of Spengler's legacy stems from the linear impression of his argument, it is to the digression that one must turn for his art.⁹

The limitless world of the Faustian depth-experience is monumentally realized in the cathedral with its organ, the synaesthetically perfected cavern which combines the mystery of the charmed Thracian wood, the Delphic grove and the Black Forest with the Daedelian mastery of Direction and Space in pure ornamentation. The cathedral represents the theatre of secrets and "atmospheric semblances," of crepuscular heights and glowing depths, its soaring sense of spatiality rendered in other media by the "inwardness" of Rembrandt's chromatics in the self-portraits and the "color-tones" of Beethoven's late quartettes:

The character of the Faustian cathedral is that of the forest. The mighty elevation of the nave above the flanking aisles, in contrast to the flat roof of the basilica; the transformation of the columns which with base and capital had been set as self-contained individuals in space, into pillars and clustered-pillars that grow up out of

⁹The analogy of the seasons, which Spengler uses to suggest a predictable pattern for creativity in a table entitled "'Contemporary' Spiritual Epochs," tracing the career of "spiritual creative force" from its birth in the "Rural-intuitive" Spring, through the "earliest urban and critical stirrings" of Summer, the "zenith of strict intellectual creativeness" of the Autumn to its "extinction" in Winter, is echoed in the four generic mythoi of Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. In an essay on *The Decline of the West*, Frye dwells on the seasonal model as well as on the morphological, but remarks the rhapsodic qualities of Spengler's work, which he calls "one of the world's great Romantic poems." *Spengler Revisited*, *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington, 1976), pp. 179-198.

the earth and spread on high into an infinite subdivision and interlacing of lines and branches; the giant windows by which the wall is dissolved and the interior filled with mysterious light—these are the architectural actualizing of a world-feeling that had found the first of all its symbols in the high forest of the Northern plains, the deciduous forest with its mysterious tracery, its whispering of ever-mobile foliage over men's heads, its branches straining through the trunks to be free of earth. Think of Romanesque ornamentation and its deep affinity to the sense of the woods. The endless, lonely, twilight wood became and remained the secret wistfulness in all Western building forms, so that when the form-energy of the style died down — in late Gothic as in closing Baroque — the controlled abstract line-language resolved itself immediately into naturalistic branches, shoots, twigs and leaves... The rustle of the woods, a charm that no Classical poet ever felt — for it lies beyond the possibilities of Apollinian Nature-feeling — stands with its secret questions "whence? whither?" its merging of presence into eternity, in a deep relation with Destiny, with the feeling of History and Duration, with the quality of Direction that impels the anxious, caring, Faustian soul towards the infinitely-distant Future.¹⁰

The characteristic pattern of transport in the Spenglerian aria wanders from the work to a mimetic origin, to an analogue among other form-languages (usually musical, as the synaesthesia tends to draw the secret away from the visual to the aural, in this case from the "mysterious tracery" to its "whispering" and the "rustle"), to a final invocation of the theological which complements rather than dispels the "mysterious light" of arcane pantheism. This represents the liberal decline of linear theorizing in favor of tonic rhapsody. The moments of transition (from interior to exterior, architecture to music, solid to atmospheric, and so on) abide by an economy so compressed, as in the conjunctions of "lines and branches" and "the abstract language resolved itself immediately into naturalistic branches," that the temporal dimension of this metamorphosis seems negligible, where the rhetoric of his capitalization practice strives to effect that "merging of presence into eternity."¹¹ Having rejected the somatic immediacy of Classical stasis, he invokes the ecstatic immediacy (albeit "like temple and statue") of the Faustian will-to-fulfillment, in his actualization of the depth-experience.

In another passage, the same desire finds its reflection in the surface of a

¹⁰Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York, 1926), p. 396.

¹¹Ruskin's description of the woodcarving in the choir of Amiens is similar in theme as well as style, incorporating both the mysterious and the Daedelian in an organic hyperbole of ornamentation: "Sweet and young-grained wood it is: oak, trained and chosen for such work, sound now as four hundred years since. Under the carver's hand it seems to cut like clay, to fold like silk, to grow like living branches, to leap like living flame. Canopy crowning canopy, pinnacle piercing pinnacle — it shoots and wreaths itself into an enchanted glade, inextricable, imperishable, fuller of leafage than any forest, and fuller of story than any book." *The Bible of Amiens*, Chapter IV, "Interpretations," Part v.

Rembrandt canvas, where the play of "mysterious light" is rendered by the "enigmatic brown" which clouded the Gothic nave. Control over traditional values in color and line, including the "world of moments and foregrounds" furnished by linear perspective and the spectrum of discrete natural colors, produces "a power over things" which opens "a prospect into an infinity of pure forms" in "an atmosphere of the purest spatiality." So overwhelming is the longing for spatial depth that the medial outline along which the arbitration of figure and ground formerly took place is dissolved in those "unlimited brown shadings." In the morphological context of Spengler's thesis, "somatic art" can be metonymically focused from the "bodily" in general to the parietal definition of the corporal figure, an art of walls and membranes interrupted by the exuberant "spread" of pure chromaticism, the pervasive atmosphere of the "unrealist colour that there is":

At the same time with this, there appeared in Western painting another symbol of highest significance, which subdued more and more the actuality of all colour — the "studio-brown" (atelierbraun). This was unknown to the early Florentines and the older Flemish and Rhenish masters alike, Pacher, Dürer, Holbein, passionately strong as their tendency toward spatial depth seems, are quite without it, and its reign begins only with the last years of the Sixteenth century. This brown does not repudiate its descent from the "infinitesimal" greens of Leonardo's Schongauer's and Grunewald's backgrounds, but it possesses a mightier power over things than they, and it carries the battle of Space against Matter to a decisive close. It even prevails over the more primitive linear perspective, which is unable to shake off its Renaissance association with architectural motives. Between it and the Impressionist technique of the visible brush-stroke there is an enduring and deeply suggestive connection. Both in the end dissolve the tangible existence of the sense-world — the world of moments and foregrounds — into atmospheric semblances. The Magian gold-ground had only dreamed of a mystic power that controlled and at will could thrust aside the laws governing corporeal existence within the world-cavern. But the brown of these pictures opened a prospect into an infinity of pure forms... The contemporary striving of instrumental music towards freer and ever freer chromatics (de Rore, Luca Marenzio) and towards the formation of bodies of tone by means of string and wind choruses corresponds exactly with the new tendency of oil-painting to create pictorial chromatics out of pure colours, by means of these unlimited brown shadings and the contrast-effect of immediately juxtaposed colour strokes. Thereafter both the arts spread through their worlds of tones and colours — colour-tones and tone-colours — an atmosphere of the purest spatiality, which enveloped and rendered, no longer body — the human being as a shape — but the soul unconfined. And thus was attained the inwardness that in the deepest works of Rembrandt and of Beethoven is able to unlock the last secrets themselves — the inwardness which Apollinian man had sought with his strictly somatic art to keep at bay.¹²

To strive to reclaim the soul from the depths of the sixteenth-century episteme, to facilitate the triumph of the aesthetically-solicited, Faustian *anamnesis*, this mystical brown is promoted from the background and becomes the presiding medium in an attempt to dissolve the division of two realms. It is only the "soul unconfined" which can mingle with the shades of Mallarmé's Pulcheria, Blanchot's Lazarus, Rilke's Orpheus, Stevens' Angel, Bloom's Valentinus, or the obedient visitors summoned by Yeats in draughty tower rooms. They glide onto a half-lit stage from behind the trembling reredos, avatars of a world of essences and origins; they strive with one another and reveal their own desires as well as ours before receding from abstraction into their own abyss:

...to wait before the puppet stage, — no, rather
gaze so intensely on it that at last
to upweigh by gaze, an angel has to come
and play a part there...¹³

Reluctantly, like the spectators from Plato's cave, after the performance we re-ascend with the critic the steps of the theatre to the painful light of day.

¹²The Decline of the West, pp. 250-251.

¹³Rilke, The Duino Elegies, *The Fourth Elegy*, tr. J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York, 1963), p. 45.

Semih Firincioğlu

MULTIVALENCE IN THE WORK OF ART

The evaluation will be made outside of any law outplaying not only the law of culture but equally that of anti-culture, developing beyond the subject all the value hidden behind 'I like' or 'I don't like'.

—Roland Barthes

I

I look at a cracked wall surface. An image appears in a while. It becomes clearer as I grow attentive. I am absorbed by the illusion. I see no wall, I see no cracks, but only a picture on the wall. I presume that the image appears by way of a coincidental figuration on the wall. But later, when I look at the same area again, I usually cannot find the image where I left it. Instead, I see another figure in the same area, consisting of the same cracks. If I try to see whether I am able to see another image there, I see that I can. I learn that it is possible to see several images in the same area and that it is also possible to go back and see the previous images over and over again as long as I can remember their exact shapes. I “switch” from one image

to the other. After I commit to memory the exact shape and placement of two of the figures, I try to see both of them together, simultaneously, and I suddenly find myself facing a wall and staring at its cracks. I start all over again only to reach the end that will bring me back to the beginning to start all over again.

I look at a portrait — *Mona Lisa*, for instance — and I see that the face does not bare a single, specific expression. I see two or more expressions in the face, successively. I move closer to the picture to see how the artist has achieved this “openness.” When I am a few inches away from the canvas surface, I see the detail of a small area — brush strokes and paint in different shapes and color. When I am this close to the canvas, I cannot see the rest of the painting for it remains out of my visual range. Therefore, although I *know* that I am looking at a small area which is a part of the painting, what I see from that distance are brush strokes and paint that represent nothing. After studying the details I step back to see *how* the particulars come together to form the whole and as I move back my visual range gradually widens to include the entire canvas. I move back to the point where I see the multivalent face again.

The wall presents only the smallest, the most fundamental components, metaphorically, the *quanta* of a pictorial composition: a surface covered with cracks that form lines, dots, hollows, ridges, shades — in an entirely arbitrary, non-representational organization. When I look at the wall in the very beginning of my projection process, I see the cracks in their *iconic* identity — as cracks and nothing else. My mind, triggered by the *schemata*-like texture of the wall surface undergoes a projection process that is nothing but an attribution of *mimetic* identity to the cracks. This is an imaginary act of painting where the artist and the beholder are the same person. However, due to the imaginary quality of my creation and the static nature of my *quanta*, what I achieve in the end, the product of my production, bears an indefinite, uncanny and “open” quality. It is a product that leads me toward thinking about its nature and, therefore, about its production. It does not allow itself to be seen as an autonomous representational entity detached from its production. It is a product that points at its production. What I actually achieve in the case of wall images is a perpetual motion on a temporal plane, between the beginning and the end, between the *iconic* and the *mimetic*, and through this act of construction and deconstruction I learn what “projection” is.

Man’s faculty of projecting images on material that contains *schemata*-like features as on clouds, stone surfaces, tree trunks, cracked walls, has been a major reference point in artists’ choice of style long before the beginning of psychological investigations in this area and the invention of the Rorschach test. Analogously, painting has been seen as the painter’s rendering visible the image he projects on his canvas for the beholding of the beholder. The criterion in discerning the artist’s style has been the degree of “openness” of the product. What has determined the

direction of art's evolution can perhaps be reduced to the ideological conflict between two stances. On the one hand there has been the motion that the artist create a well-defined, "finished" representation which detaches itself from its production and presents itself to the beholder as an entity to be evaluated only in terms of the meaning of its content. On the other hand has been the motion that the artist achieve an open end which does not disguise its production and engenders an awareness, in the beholder, of his own as well as of the artist's share in the actualization of the work. Employment of techniques such as Cozens' *blotting* or Leonardo's *sfumato* (cloudy, smoky outline) were to leave the end open. The purpose was to remind the beholder that *he is looking at a picture that is painted* by an *artist*. The degree of openness always varied in relation to the degree of some artists' desire to make the product disguise its production — in other words, their desire to create an illusion.

What I project on the wall shows me *how* I project it and as a result I learn what "projection" is. *What* has been painted leads me to the examination of *how* it has been painted and by this I learn what the phenomenon of painting is. The question "what does it mean?" is the question of those who are taught to concern themselves only with the semantic value of the product — by those illusionists who survive on illusion. When the artist exposes the praxis that forms this entity whose meaning is questioned, he opens the way to a higher question: "What is the meaning of the meaning of a work of art?" This exposure renders the *meta* aspect that always exists along with the *semantic* aspect in every work of art. Indeed, *every* work of art reflects upon its being. However, as I stated above, in some works this reflection may be blurred, the production and, therefore, the *meta* value disguised. On the opposite side of this policy lie those works which centralize reflection upon their own being. The stronger the illusion in the former, the more the later works to dispell illusion. The stronger one feels the urge to mystify, the stronger is the urge to demystify in the other. There have been times when the opposition between the two policies was so strong that certain artists went so far as to make works that may be named *metapaintings*, in which the phenomenon of painting becomes the content (as in Vermeer's *Artist in His Studio* or in Velazquez's *The Maids of Honor*).

In summary, dispelling illusion in the beholder in order to enable him to experience the work in its totality occurs in three sequences: the multivalent meaning of the product dismantles the production and enables the beholder to view it in a wider perspective. The prominent feature and the accelerator in this expansion process is multivalence. Multivalence indicates the simultaneous existence of multiple elements whose being can be *learned* and *known* but cannot be perceived simultaneously. Therefore multivalence does not bear an aesthetic value. *Learning* that a work of art embodies multivalence is nothing but the beholder's being placed in the position of observer. However, multivalence initiates and

accelerates the process that, in the end, locates the beholder in a situation where he views himself viewing, standing face to face with the semantic level of the work, *on a par* with its meta value. Such is the *Dasein* of the space between the viewed and the viewer, that is, of the aesthetic of the gaze being in that space.

II

Theatre, which has been undergoing a self-abolition process through repetition, is in need of an analytical exploration period more than ever. It is necessary for the theatre to *quantize* itself and examine the co-existence and the co-functioning of its *quanta*, its components, in search of a new way.

Sound in theatre must be materialized within geometric space instead of conceptualized in Pythagorean terms. It is necessary to *present* the execution and observation of sound organization both as "man's production and organization of sound" and as discourse — in relation to text, body, movement; object, etc.

In speech, the duration between the moment of sending air up to the larynx and the moment of completing the intended discourse covers the entire process and procedure of sound organization. Through the process of selection and production of sounds in a particular order and with certain prosodic characteristics, a significative, "meaningful" linguistic unit is constructed (in terms of an established, atemporal code). Thus, the act of linguistic utterance or, in other words, the production of sounds with the aim of constructing significative units, becomes the *performance* of sound organization due to its forward movement on a temporal distance that begins with the primary, non-significative units of sound and ends with the most complex organization of it, i.e. linguistic discourse. This is "*the making of what is being made*" that goes unnoticed in the shade of the target: the semantic level of the discourse.

Music is a lower form of speech: it falls in between disorganized sound and language on the scale of sound organization. It is the organization of non-linguistic sounds through the employment of the formal features and the compositional concepts that are conjoint in linguistic utterance in a phenomenally subtle way. (Singing, therefore, covers the transitional area between music and speech.)

Music is considered to be a system of forms that has no content level and, therefore, no connotative value. However, non-verbal sounds, even in disorganized form, are loaded with semantic content and, although they have a broad, unspecific, and "pre-culturalized" semantic resource, they do have connotative value. We define, judge, attribute adjectives to music, unaware of the fact that non-verbal sounds *mean* to us as simple signals (in the Pavlovian sense) as the result of our tendency to form associations between the *auditory* and the *visual*. It is this unawareness that

enabled the mass media and performing arts to make an effective weapon of illusion and manipulation out of music.

The situation created by the existence of the semantic level (what is being performed) *on a par* with its meta level (what is performance) forms the aesthetic value of the performance. It seems that this major aesthetic principle of art — above all of painting and modern dance — points at the direction to be taken toward “the new.”

REFERENCES

- Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text (New York, 1977).*
Roland Barthes, "Literature and Metalanguage," in Critical Essays (Evanston, 1972)
E.M. Gombrich, Art and Illusion (Princeton, 1969).
Roman Jakobson, Six Lectures on Sound and Meaning (London, 1981).
H.W. Janson, "Chance Images," in Dictionary of the History of Ideas (New York, 1973).
Tom Tashiro, "Ambiguity as Aesthetic Principle," in Dictionary of the History of Ideas (New York, 1973).

III
EXCODIFICATION
AND
THE ACTUALIZED PROPOSITION

Linda Mussmann

AS METAPHYSICAL CAKE

Relieved of responsibility Beauty enters. Now she lists as the boat sways. Beauty as metaphysical cake, borderless icing. A request in float with labor. Helen, the lucky number, the black cat. We all liked it. The bank we all went there.

Beauty withdrew. And they paint mine pink and they paint mine red. We considered the ability last. We learned how. A place for petunias and the casual spoon. The pig in the blanket. The big and the bank. The pink and the pig. She refuses the refuge. Hey Pumkin. How is it.

Curls and frills of Beauty. How many do they want. How many do they need. A steam iron. A steam engine. A hole in the road. A fish in the lake. A clog in the sink. Oh well, what do you think. I lost the directions. The walls point north. The window

rests. The dog is registered. They eliminate odor. They park cars. I listen to news. They bring snacks. She rides to work. He holds precious. They bake bread without looking. When all is said and done we throw open the door. If you can't take the heat. Open the door. If you can bear the bear bury the beast. If you let the self rise. The bread will bake. And in the afternoon she set the table. She discussed the table. Amid all the requirements there was still not mentioned the sense nor the smell nor the roses nor the wall nor the iris nor the lilac.

The roses lost the war, the nylon run. My notes are forever whereas suits are unconscious. The long haul of the graced arm. Now horses find riders. Hope rides with open windows. The face eludes the scarf. The arm goes away. But here the face is available the notion is notion as threads are to thimbles as all are to noon. Beauty is also for stones, the risk in slowness. Feathers calculate the territory about the hat. If even is to consider then I am late and dinner is absolute. The other in so doing missed the boat in floating my mind lost a correction. A canoe is not only. Can a canoe remember embrace the softness of lovely. Is the night dark and the day less. Is the dream dreary.

Are dogs tired. Is the sieve washable, anxious. Can it carry packages. Can the refrigerator make announcements. Territory casts metaphor. Sinks are responsible. The blemish is blind. Is the bride back. Closure insists on the plant. When the available Beauty predicts the Beauty proceeds with cautious steps. Ever is willing to hang the clothes. The hour dictates infinite pleasure, ever assuring the hoop skirt. Total is the suit; Partial, the tie; Immense, the overcoat; the breeches, a Burden; Bliss is the collar; Rigor, the cuff. Beauty is a pocketless shirt, a dirty spot on time.

The subtle door resists its hinges. And how the clouds tumble toward disorder. And how the solo performance drifts toward the hedges. When they rested they slept when they slept they forgot when they forgot they went back. How is that. Numerous times I remember Beauty. The vulnerable the able the few. The obscure the tired the unnot. Awful is the luxury of habit. The soap told jokes while the hay was saved and the cattle abandoned. The chickens exhausted. However was considered. All of them sorted the laundry. Inclusion existed in snow storms. White was respectful. Close did not count. If every issue wears slips then dresses are state lines. Pink blesses the surface. All dictators wear it. No we don't need any. Shoulders level perspective, heels arch. A pound forms my lines. Inclusion is trivia. Let them eat cake, a revolution. Mystery rides horses. Carpenters are companions. Yellow is efficient like ankleless shoes. They inquire, they make patterns, they resist edges. They do not march in rows. Blue is the favorite. Organization can bear the chest. Fruit is ordinary. Wild counts on tomatoes. Sun merits grass. Even is said. Sad is undone. Dresses dress. Hair is combed. Lips, stuck. Feet seen. Arms shown. Wrists displayed. There is no difference between an inaugural address. Calculate the noise.

Terror is powder. Does the face succumb. How nice he looked. Based on

perfection. The cow stood still. The cows are in the corn. Oh boy blue. What happened to you. The cabbage grows in a row. Carrots grow in rows as do cars, linoleum, desire, dishes. Oh boy blue. What happened to you. Effort to rescue the Nile, the linoleum, the floor tile. All is Helen of Troy.

Friends on Friday. Born on Monday. Died on Sunday. It's the money in the bank. It's the memory in the snow. It's the foot in the door. Or did you like it. How come. Oh boy blue boy blue which is your left shoe. Where do you assemble your dishes. Where does your head rest. How come Oh boy blue boy. The cows are in the corn.

The irregular notion, the spool of thread, the lipstick, the gloss. My favorite Bossy. A foot in the lake, a class act, a gracious reception. The elegant lost. The poor own powder. The hungry possess lace. The ignorant swear by it. The darkness is split by appropriation. The even is equal. The taxes paid. The crayons melted. The Americans lost. The public waves. The signs are lost. The ship is frantic. The harbor is a parking lot. The edge grey. The indistinguishable perishes. The mile is mad. The tires are barren. The sand costs. The clouds cost. All ourships regret the power. All Beauty begs to be held and overthrows the monarch. The grass cries at dawn. The circus rates nothing possible. Our love can't. Our lies hate. Our dishes broke. Our mice marry. The hall is the connector. The drug store is finished. Einstein is tired. The relatives call him. He explains the way. He shows the shore its limits. Beware of blame. Oh boy blue how are you. Oh boy blue boy blue.

Beauty looks. All contemplate order. By New Years they were exhausted. Still there was hope for the tulips. The violets. And often they borrowed the flag. There limits made petticoats. We supposed the curtains were lace. However went to Florida. Shoes make gardens. Nests are public. Banks deliver punches. Solo regards the long distance The ordinary resists sleeves and the low neck remembers that history is irresponsible. The alarm made distance precious. Diamonds are forever, rain thin. The rabbit hoped. The rest reassured themselves that more often than not it would possibly happen again and again a reassurance beyond reassurance. The last glance. She likes you too. The tune is at least memorable and the horse is in the stable and chickens whistle to themselves. Afternoons gain attention. Before they came here there was a calmness perceptible. Palm trees told the monkeys that radiance must wear a suit. But if the tie forgets bring the hammer and if the nails are forlorn issue a warrant. Then we will certainly please the authorities. If Beauty arrests you, leave town. After a while certain things could be remembered. Then they enter with tulips and tulips. A peculiar kind of order where the nose is too small and the shoes too tall and Beauty is particular.

Look out. Tulips for granted. Armys wear costumes. Never mind the other. When the time comes we will. Solo is dancing. The blessing is inside. No one wonders how. The form is normative. Procedure is worn out. Color forecasts the

conclusion. Illusion proffers hayrides. Pumpkins are not related. Death is undisturbed. We stood near one. The pine row is tired. The ledges make things apparent. Is the dress the ordinary color. Is the cuff linked. Is the glove clean.

In the evening we wear something else. In the field we look distinct. In the town we look. After the chores we rested. Then geese fly north. The hedge is not busy. In order to distinguish the marks we told lies. In keeping a diary the details were explicit. As regards to the home run. We never saw one. Enough is ordinarily full of anxiety. And pleasure makes haste. Is everything alright. How far does this go. If on is incredible. The field is a particular place. In landscape there is thought. The worn is a simple example of arbitration. If I take the next flight I will. Even though they are lonely they still write letters, eat lunch, make phone calls. And carry. The direction is a sample. I concluded that all was not only. The deliberate punch. Not only again. Whereas there was likely a late show. Where the shoes could rest and be apart from any other distractions. In going we solved all the problems.

All were delighted and resisted arrest. The women danced. The men sat. The skates rolled. The teeth flashed. The ladies competed. The men chatted. The children made love. The flag waved. Oh boy blue Oh boy where are you. The cows are so forlorn with out your horn.

No crystals for glasses. No pains toward infinity. No display of affection. Absence is in order. We all laugh at jokes. Tired is the registration. All hearts show possession. All lips are two. All eggs are rolling. The stone is a pattern. The Japanese adjust tea. My is a calculation against my better nature. Noses are symbols for traffic. The necessary is opposed to forests. They include lunch. As the dilemma increased the show was more boring. There is a certain willingness toward order. In assembling the dishes, I was warned of the out come. Now I am not interested in the pursuit or the plane. Or the other. If you want me to participate you must wait. If you can't get used to the heat. Get out of the kitchen. If you don't like the tulips cut them. After all I did not order those. They arrived by themselves. If the door slams shut it.

All these things are forgotten. In reality there was some truth to all of it. In remembering they shared the tragedy but learned nothing. In wondering we made plans to escape. While they waited the books were closed the windows shut and the parrot put to sleep. As a matter of fact they also left the windows open and the door shut but it did not cause the fire. If they were crazy I would know it. If they wanted my coat they should have asked me.

My response is perfect. The closet must be moved. The north altered. The cow led. The walls painted. The phone answered. The dishes done. Nice deliverance. I called it as I saw it. When the harbor asks for me to tell them. If the tune is happy call it a name. Liking is the act of too much. Is the color pink unregrettable.

The dictionary danced with the cattle and all those necessary came to lunch.

Her socks are unusual. If the window is draft then exits are total. Everyone is capable of a sign. If the smell interrupts behavior we will not regret it. The complaint lifts weight toward a conclusion. And even after all that they were still friends. The bread is too white. The dark to rye. Eventually they ran out. In an effort to make myself clear grey was my best advice. If I knew where the verb went I would leave it.

The runner stopped. The notes broken. The ship abandoned. Noise is a collective.

Toward north the sample was simple. They stood in the middle of the field with their backs toward the south. In any event there were no phones to wake them and no mail to be answered and no beds to be made. It was a solo performance. The sadness was for them a new form of seeking disorder. The land was relaxed. The horizon and the trees signed the certificates. Information was for strawberries as gloves are to snakes. We listened closely and still heard the silence. Noon was the perfect example. The corn crib made motions that wait unbearable.

How about it. Went as established. Now the door closes and the shades stir. In the ordinary way rules are abandoned and new ones are fashionable. Where did they go. A relaxed leg leads to another. When the direction supports the notion we can ask to leave. As the shift become recognizable we limit how many. To toll is to ask. Income is a practice.

When the moon shines it shines. When the even is tied then the cows will come home. The trees watch everything and sure the earth resents us. Did they deliver the hay. If the sun shines let it. I noticed you have a new shoe. Tulips grow in rows. First red second green third red, fourth blue. Fifth grey 6th yellow 8th tired. I ordered the burger. Is the burger Beauty. Is the fish a swimmer. Is contrast allowed. Now I can come to dinner. Even if she could she would never. Not noticed not seen. Certitude is a luxury of after thought. In this condition any thing could happen. Why did you say that. The suit is also. Myth is extra. Total is the sufficient next with out remembering.

If the circle fits wear it. No one noticed her slip was showing. She thought she would never recover. Not necessary but she did it just to be sure. The roast was last and the potatoes first. The tulips became particular after all. Then is a considerable amount. Even if the refrigerator broke we would go on. A conditional agreement even with all the pressure the heart continued to beat and the blood ran and the pulse rose and conclusions were abandoned. Why after all did they come. Another pleasure would be ordered and toward evening the lost horizon would call the shots. As the rain did so did others. Now we got on the train to avoid the rush of feet toward the elevator.

And Newton's apples were thrown. The evidence was successful. The next trial announced the next paradise invented. As usual the dog was abandoned for no reason.

Ham and eggs. Easy over. Sunny side up. Scrambled. Poached. Boiled. Deviled. Delivered. Picked up. Washed. Weighted. Packed. All these are duties. Homages to business. Chickens have birthdays. Arrows know nothing. Careful who you believe now a days. You bought them you count them. North depends on the others. Identity explains nothing.

After all when the deeds were done and the cake was made we expressed ourselves best. Nothin's as lovin' as somethin' from the oven and. So what if the stable rhymes with table. The tulips changed sides. The republic looked tired. Often the designs repeat themselves without effort. The trouble is not obvious.

The tulips arrange themselves. Coincidence is not insurance. Issues need curtains. The needless are looking. Effort is the bright light. So now tell us all about it. Every serves deserts and makes jokes. No sugar no cream. Just plain. Thank you. Bankrupt. Borrowed time. Class actions. Monkeys wear suits with out buttons.

Independence is a state of chronic encounters. The middle marks the caution and the yellow light of sorrow. Is blend the after all. In short the phrases will welcome each other. Intermittent floods call the rain insignificant. Without those doors the luxury of fainting was out of the question. In Ohio men play foot ball. Make tires. And tell stories to their grandmothers. She sleeps. I make hay.

In requiring tunes the melody was retired. Now I cannot remember the ritual of evening nor the morning nor the receptions nor the calm of mid day nor the snow on the lawn. How was it that the familiar became so quickly distanced and the lonely bought bread all in the same day. Was there a knowing when the dessert was served and the pie sliced. Now how can there be issues to discuss when the bread does not rise. And the dough refuses to enter. And the cues are absent. Still there cannot be only part of the window absent from the pain. Or the cattle became so dissatisfied with their habit that they gladly made sacrifices.

Without metaphor cakes were credible. The knowing was hidden in the salt and pepper. If a kindness is clearly established then groceries will be abandoned. If yet is possible then questions are also arbitrary. If I look for conclusions then I am already finished. Don't stack the dishes. Left is a point of departure. Even if I sell all the eggs I know where to get more. As the sun sets so do the hens. The remarkable is habit forming. The ordinary is distinguished by no marks.

I like noise without stories. Thorough is hard to say. Likely runs the race. Even when the moon shines the legs ache. If the slip shows. Let it. Patches are for berries. The toss loves the coin without recollection. The toe nail looks toward the hammer. Arbitrary signs for supper. Then the news came. The announcement abandoned the current and the cat fell asleep with the book in her lap and the light still burning. The lesson unteachable. How Beauty now Beauty.

Attach adoration. Start the stove. Encore the tulip bed. Get up. Arrange the hair net. Sacrifice sleep. Wear your boots. Ignore the plane. Ride the rails. Use the

cushions. A precautionary pleasure. The insurance is paid for. The boats bury fish.

The glasses force picnics and with all that they still could not cross the street with out hesitation. How many corners have you turned. Did you count them. Could you find them. Did you use them.

In listening the horizon was established. In breathing the mind was expanded. In swimming the pool was moved. How did this time explain the next one. If you are worried about history don't bother. If you are worried call your brother. If thinking is an event then mountains will not be needed to ascend. If goats refuse the trash then time has come. When the dogs dance let them. In concluding we slow down the accelerator. While all the closets were cleaned I walked through the linen. If the door opens examine the frame. No announcements could be sent until there was something to say. This all may seem unnecessary but some one must do it.

They stood up. The job was done. The die cast. The play made. The heart weary. The eyes startled. And the curious still travel. In lending her my socks it was a risk well taken. She lost her shoes. A remarkable story. As delight was cancelled the corner was removed. The diet begun the children washed the horse saddled. The crisis came as the clouds accumulated and the air taught the future to listen. As the heart beat the thunder made the dog crazy. If they leave it will make them uneasy. Now they all learned how to knit socks. No one wore them. They hardly could hear it. As the forest grew dark so did the shadow. After all the risk was a mistake for the future. At any time we knew they would come to get them.

If the fish abandon the pond that's their business. They all have certain skill. However all the calls received resembled another. Why after all do stones not bother. I require the hour as usual. Will he be there. Can they bother. At last the elbows were seen. The crowd thought. The hill looked down. And the list grew. But only at times did the corn grow. The weather was a character. Invention was the primary device here. If we could get rid of the feathers we could mow the lawn. A short story was the least of the problems. When in doubt doubt. Only she got up and arrived on time. The line breaks my heart. The score was tied. How do you like that. Saucers are for cats. Pelicans live in Florida.

Is the curb in the city. Is the curb in the house. Is the place in its place. Now knows no pleasure. Enough necks make a dazzling invention. They froze and now she's just beginning to walk. Thanks a million. Thanks a million. How many is a thanks. The boats look best parked by the bushes. If only they had some. Not often do the sick get healthy. More often the healthy get sick. And the sick sicker. How come. Thanks a million.

There was a phone call. The operator relayed the message. The door opened the flag flew. The bird cackled the egg grew. None noticed none cared none. Rather they all moved then just one. When I remove certain words you listen for the absent portions. It's the same when the potatoes are missing. Thanks a million.

Oh those Beautiful boats. In looking we flew fast. If the cat confessed. Then the mouse had control. This was never the case. If I cease to be interested I will call you. Intrigue listens for heart beats. Transfers wear boots.

Here we are. Thanks a million. Thanks.

My desire is not equal. Your train ticket is explicit. Cats climb trees without understanding.

The particular patterns as notional extracts suggest that beauty is at stake. The work makes a gesture for beauty not by comparison but by concretion. Never is it in contrast. It makes its own self-sufficient structure, ever-evolving towards a being unto the self of the actual. It strives to leave out the inherited while striking an alliance with the cliché by affirming a positive name for the decision.

The attitude toward the affirmation comprises the unresolved work of remembrance and the solutionless satisfaction of the actual. The other performs the tasks of functional clamour much as the slip does in relation to lace. Its plane holds horizontal projections without preconceived order. The negative space is a region where beauty is the mirror with no object, a mirage with an effaced expression. The trite and the overlooked become the last act of the inexplicable. The inactive object obviates description and the past tense is activated by the illuminations of an unaccountable future, while the past embraces its decline and repair like a double edge floating and slashing or splintering its way toward the other, the already dead present.

The beauty in the beauty out. The totality in comprehension of thought about is toward availability of Beauty as one who holds it. Possession — 9/10's of the law. The land moving the sea is the scape of privacy in a public domain. The dead frame makes a form move towards beauty.

Does the habit make the skirt longer. Is the leg a consideration. Are all legs considered. Are no legs considered. Is one leg considered. Do all forms make available the elements of desire, despair and distinction. Are all considered. Is one considered. Who makes the original. Can the actual realize its moment. Are grotesques imagined. Is narcissism contagious. Can contempt be an ingredient. Is the bridge the original solo. My definite night. My cool memory. Are complaints intruders. Are all these pleasing.

All Beauty rests on gold platters somewhere without modesty without notice. All sleep as objects with memory banks. Storage centers for the title to our property. All notes for notes by notes, all chords require road-stones toward silver ladles.

*Is the remark responsible to the function.
Is the Beauty apparent as actual.
Is the possession worthy of the focus.
Is the fetish responsible to the desire.
Is the product worthy of being held.
Is the heart moved in place of air.*

- 1. If all shows the neglect only.*
- 2. Then poses refer only to containers.*
 - 1. If requests are markets.*
 - 2. Then argument resists arrest.*
- 1. If Beauty thrills the eye.*
- 2. The biscuits are better.*
 - 1. If ritual marks desire.*
 - 2. Then armies are elements.*
- 1. If concerns are close pins.*
- 2. Then holding is forbidden.*
 - 1. If arrows do not point.*
 - 2. The elephants may argue.*
- 1. If intrusion bakes bread.*
- 2. The water lists only.*
 - 1. If lace likes the edge.*
 - 2. Then requests make deliveries.*
- 1. If kites go north.*
- 2. Then wind relies on trains.*
 - 1. If eggs treat symptoms.*
 - 2. Then flour likes desert.*
- 1. If mountains move west.*
- 2. Then air looks for more.*
 - 1. If lakes like.*
 - 2. Then snow knows.*
- 1. If true has enough.*
- 2. Then so do I.*
 - 1. If wheat likes the land.*
 - 2. Then every shifts to south.*
- 1. If honor spills the beans.*
- 2. Then the banks close.*
 - 1. If terror breaks hearts.*
 - 2. Then baskets color eggs.*
- 1. If notes are chords.*

2. Then efforts are candles.
1. If thanks are amazed.
2. Then rigor is intended.
1. If all is occur.
2. Then ever is overwhelming.
1. If sun exists early.
2. Then borrow the news.
1. If carrots can't last.
2. Then revise the order.
1. If any is in style.
2. Then bridge the gap.
1. If nature is elegant.
2. Then open the door.
1. If art is lonely.
2. Then raise the rent.
1. If argue is motion.
2. Then onions are result.
1. If natural is commend.
2. Then ally is reknown.
1. If at last is subsequent.
2. Then tradition is overcast.
1. If radical is to talent.
2. Then melon is to late.
1. If allowance.
2. Then after all.
1. If true.
2. Then include.
1. If other.
2. Then impatient.
1. If culture.
2. Then know.
1. If casual.
2. Then suit.
1. If recline is to late.
2. Then form is current.

We requested all the possible notions the possible sounds. We showed and in showing we made edges profound. It was always the issue of the work and how were we to contend with the absence of Beauty and the presence of Beauty. Was it possible to work with this Beauty which would compete neither with its

presence nor absence. Nor could it be tired, nor could it be hostile, nor could it ever be deprived. Social, radical, intelligent, elegant, passionate, and simultaneously repulsive and graceful — Beauty could, perhaps, even afford to use the old words, the old language if it were in reference to its otherness. If the retardation were removed then air might resolve the wound and the notion be displayed. Beauty would resemble nothing compromised. And obtain its effect. All days are the seventh. The motional state to some power.

Maureen Connor and Meg Shore

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

A DIALOGUE

*Put off that mask of burning gold,
That mask with emerald eyes,
That I may know who you are,*

*I will not put away my mask,
It is the mask of burning gold,
It is the mask with emerald eyes,
That makes your heart beat so quickly,
I would be praised by the beating of your heart*

—William Butler Yeats,
*The Mask**

MC:

The question is, what do we expect from art and how has this been determined? Or, to put it another way, what is the role of beauty and how is it defined? Once an ideal is established, how is it negated and what explains the acceptance of its replacement? Only questions seem appropriate here. Beauty, the beautiful, the good, are protections against our fears — they hide from us what we fear most. We must cross-examine ourselves to remove fear's disguise. Is beauty truth? I doubt it. Not that beauty lies, but that it hides one thing while appearing to reveal another. It places a fascinating mask on the temporarily horrific. Criticism

*Unpublished early draft, from Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and The Masks* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978), p. 175.

mediates the removal and relocation of this mask with a skillful sleight of hand.

The beautiful ages and fades, wears itself out, no longer full of mystery. Each shift, each change in the nature of the mask serves to reveal what was hidden. The Bison is no longer needed to sustain the life of the agrarian tribe; the Egyptian sense of frontality is no longer necessary to maintain order in the Greek city-state; the religious theme is no longer required to justify painting in the French court; the pedestal is dispensable to the site specific installation; the list is endless.

But how do the scales fall from our eyes, and what determines the locus of beauty to follow? An interrogative method can be quite general yet paradoxically personal. I ask a question. You answer it. In the questions and answers to follow we have tried to determine some relationships between criticism and beauty. What emerge from this discourse are investigations rather than answers.

MC:

Q: Is there a stress on individuality? Or is it submerged? How is individuality manifest within a given style? Do we expect it or does it shock us? Has so-called individualism become nothing more than subtle variations on the same phrases? What is the role of free will? Does free will exist? What aspects of the individual remain hidden, even while others are quite evident? What is the individual afraid to show?

MS:

A: Can we ever clearly distinguish between individual "free" choice and the fulfillment of historic/social expectation? Why not speak two languages at once? The language, the means of expression, is a process: a laying down of paint, finger-stroke by fingerstroke. Two processes, two languages, speaking at once, creating a babel that, somehow, communicates. But what is the image, the message. What is being said?

MC:

Q: Do critical judgments limit or stimulate the imagination? Is the image accepted as pure form or questioned in terms of its ability to establish correspondence, stimulate awareness, generate growth? Does the image keep the mind from knowing itself better, presenting a sinister reassurance for human limitation, just as the commercialized image tries to lower and then pretend to satisfy expectations? Or do attitude, affect, point of view, become more important than any real event? (Individuality itself becomes a mask, as style overwhelms content. Innovation becomes empty rather than the result of a search for deeper awareness.) What can be known through images? If images lose their power how can they be revitalized?

MS:

A: This is where an analytical approach fails me. I must let go of all reassuring structure. I suspend all knowledge, in favor of "blind faith," choosing belief rather than knowledge. I become mute, dumb, and blind, groping. I caress and I scratch, a mute, dumb, blind creature, digging within on one side, piling up the sand on the other. Finally there is a moment when the whole endeavor is about to collapse, fall in on itself. The babel has become at once unbearable and yet nearly comprehensible. That's where I stop.

MC:

Q: Is there a detachment from suffering, from negative expression, from doubt? Is the goal to transcend or to unsettle? Is a status quo that rationalizes everything as positive or necessary maintained, or is it undermined? Is there an emphasis on formal qualities or on content? Do we expect form to be irregular, and does symmetry therefore seem radical? Does symmetry/balance/harmony represent a universal ideal, or is deviance preferable? What about the loss of aesthetic neutrality....(Duchamp's urinal could now be viewed as a designed object)?

MS:

A: Well, there are both angels and demons. There are moments in my life when I know I have been touched by angels' wings. They pass over, leaving a trace I cannot quite find. Yet I am changed. It may happen once every few years. I am looking for those wings, or their evidence, and trying to remember what is ineffable. This does imply a detachment or transcendence, but then there are the demons, tugging the dreamer downward toward that leaden world where there is neither reflection, nor change, nor doubt, but smugness masking a breathless terror. It's not that one chooses between the angels and the demons. Rather, one is chosen by them — plucked at and silenced by the one side, caressed, cajoled, enticed by the other. We walk a high wire between the two, never sure if it is two worlds we are glimpsing or one, a quicksilver surface floating above a steel grey abyss.

Some people try to control what is beyond their power, attempting to keep both the demons and the angels at bay. One of my grandfathers was crazy. He tried to get people to alternate entering the house through the front and back doors so that the sets of stone steps would wear down equally. That's status quo.

MC:

Q: What is the relationship between criticism and ideals? How dogmatic has the system become? Is there a passivity, a maintenance of ideals, or is there a search for them? Or is there a negation of all ideals? The concept of the "belle laid," a term

coined by the designer Schiaparelli which literally means “beautiful/ugly,” functioned for her as a means of drawing attention away from her lack of ideal physical beauty and toward more appealing qualities such as bright color, bold line, and innovative surface decoration. Because she was not pretty she invented another kind of beauty. How are ideals determined?

MS:

A: I don’t believe in ideals or answers, just in the quest for them. A medium, fallen into a trance, speaks tongues. Suspended from this world, she talks with another. She is “touched,” crazy, but she is also “touched” by a spirit from within, or from without, but in any case alien to the logic of her surroundings. The messages she receives are not clear. She is teased, licked by tongues of fire, of inspiration, of intuition. She doesn’t pass judgment, but simply tries to pass on the information.

As a young child I spoke in tongues in my sleep — a private language, unintelligible but clearly structured. Perhaps I am trying to unearth and decipher those tongues.

MC:

Q: How do ideals relate to fashions?

“When the mind surrenders itself to fashion the first casualty is objective judgment — which is to all intents, the mind itself.”

—Kennedy Fraser

Fashions in clothing, art, thought, have provided the most historically consistent protection from fear of the unknown — the naked body with all its blemishes and imperfections, the unfettered mind with all its powers and abilities.

How does the mask of fashion intersect with the mask of beauty? When fashions draw on references to the past does this imply a direct relation to or need for the ideals these quotations represent? Or is the nostalgic fashion mocking the ideal, negating it or merely ignorant of its content? How can criticism avoid fashion’s trap?

MS:

A: If there are ideals, they can’t really be imposed from without (i.e., fashion) but, rather, are undercurrents. We choose them “at will,” but really by chance, being nourished or denied but never “right.” The mind surrendering itself to fashion has nothing to do with mind, but with a mirroring of the outer world, a desire to feel socially integrated. The mind, on the other hand — be it the mind’s eye, the mind’s

heart, or the irrational ravings of the "mindless" — the mind, to me, responds to what is either pre-existent and buried beneath the mask of time, or what is come upon by change, something existing through an accidental convergence of circumstances. The former, the buried secret, is sought. I try to get at something already there, delving, wondering. The latter, the chance occurrence, seems to seek me out — a cumulative laying down of hands, a building up of layers, memories, patterns. Fashion and packaged nostalgia only act as distractions from this process.

Maybe the only ideal, the only thing worth cultivating, is memory, be it individual or collective. Memory is both cumulative and reductive. The dreamer awakens and attempts to peel away the layers of meaning, to glean the root, the message. In so doing, piles of discarded thoughts, memories, relationships, are built up at the edges of the excavated dream, forming a new layering, a stratification of rejected dreams. It is in the excavating/discarding process that angels' wings can be a guide. They can ruffle a pattern of comprehension through the amnesiac surface.

MC:

Q: How do beauty and criticism relate to morality? Is being good personalized concerned with identifying our responsibilities and struggling with daily life as it pushes us toward betrayals and laziness, or is it concerned with such larger issues as the development of empathy? How do formal values relate to ethical values? That images seduce us into suspending value judgments is best expressed by Hannah Arendt's definition of evil as a failure of imagination. Many artists and writers have shown how we have been taught to read images as fiction, and that without a proper system of interpretation the image is pure escape. Should there be any attempt to direct/define moral choice?

MS:

A: Of course there are times of trauma, when every choice is a life/death one. But generally one is faced with choices less clear than good/evil, right/wrong. The augurs of ancient Rome watched the birds flying over the Capitoline hill in early morning and read from their paths the way of the day. Our choices today are less directed, less legislated. We have no augurs, just some critics, just ourselves, a lot of demons, and traces of the angels — Dante's "birds of God" — that have passed over.

Climbing a winding mountain road in Greece, one arrives at the edge of a bluff and finds a crudely lettered sign (in English):

to the sunset to the castle Which way do you go?
←————— —————→

Harmony Hammond

MONSTROUS BEAUTY

THE WOMAN GONE WILD

Art and artists are made on earth, in history, in organized society. And in the modern era, as in the past, what has been sanctified as high art and called True, Good, and Beautiful is born of the aspirations of those who are empowered to shape culture.¹

Beauty and notions of beauty have been mostly male defined. Universal beauty as a basis of a belief system called esthetics is a concept of rich, white men. Those in power. Those who have a vested interest — themselves and their kind — in validating that which reflects and benefits their lives. Art which reflects this interest

¹Carol Duncan, "The Esthetics of Power in Modern Erotic Art," *Heresies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (1977).

they call universal. It is based on institutionalized beauty, that is beauty as one more patriarchal construct.

Institutionalized beauty is what white Western men decide is "good to look at."

Institutionalized beauty is a container.

Institutionalized beauty is not truth.

Institutionalized beauty is not real.

Institutionalized beauty lies.

Institutionalized beauty smooths over differences (class, sex, race, age, cultures).

Institutionalized beauty is passive, not active.

Institutionalized beauty reinforces power via esthetics.

When we talk about beauty or its philosophical extension, esthetics, we are talking about a belief system that has been used to subjugate certain peoples. Images of beauty that are woman-centered or created by Third World people are examples of images that are either ignored or ridiculed, although occasionally they are temporarily adopted by mainstream culture (the marketing of "the exotic" or "the taboo" — afros, ethnic looks, hints of suggested lesbianism in fashion magazines).

According to patriarchal concepts, images of women in art and media, and therefore women themselves, must fit certain male descriptions/limitations in order to be considered beautiful to look at. However, in these images, women are unhealthy, passive, and powerless. The patriarchal concept of female beauty is a passive one — the female being acted upon rather than acting on, or even acting at all.

As Carol Duncan points out in her article "The Esthetics of Power in Modern Erotic Art,"² Western art history is full of images depicting male domination and power over women. From Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), Ingre's *Roger and Angelicus* (1867), and Hiram Power's *The Greek Slave* (1843), to Edward Munch's *Madonna* (1893-94) and *Vampire* (1894), Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), and William de Kooning's *Woman Series* (1950's), to the currently popular and marketable new expressionist sex violent paintings from Germany and media images such as record album covers of the Rolling Stones, Ohio Players, and the Plasmatics, women are portrayed as victims. And this victimization is meant to be part of their sexual appeal. "So often do such works invite fantasies of male conquest

²Ibid. See Duncan's article for a full discussion of these works.

(or fantasies that justify male domination) that the subjugation of the female will appears to be one of the primary motives of modern (male) erotic art.”³

To achieve power and dominance the male artist turns woman into the ideal universal and unreal nude or vampire she-bitch (the femme fatale) who deserves to be and must be destroyed or restrained through specific imagery (Delacroix, Ingre, Munch, Klimt, Kirchner, etc.) or through the more sophisticated and subtle but no less dangerous means of fragmentation and abstraction (Picasso, De Kooning, etc.). Woman must be separated from herself and it must be made clear that she owes her existence to the male artist and not he to her.⁴ As Duncan says, for men, “Creation seems to equal possession.”⁵

Art promotes the relationships it portrays.

Images, objects, or persons outside these descriptions are not considered beautiful, that is not good to look at. Art that is not considered beautiful is considered bad. Raw. Undeveloped. Unrefined. And while folk art, primitive art, or “outsider art” may momentarily be in favor, they ultimately are not considered equal to or part of the great white male esthetic.

The traditional concept of beauty is one that is bestowed and institutionalized by patriarchy in its own interests. Women who are outside of this concept — that is women who are healthy, active, and powerful — become threatening and are made into monsters like the women in de Kooning and Picasso’s paintings. The woman who is herself with power, passion, and direction, must not be considered beautiful. Render her ugly and gross. When beauty and power combine, the result is called a monster, a vampire, a witch, a lesbian, a mad woman, Medusa, a woman gone wild.

A Male Description

The Medusa — one of the three gorgons slain by Perseus — like a jellyfish with tentacles. *Gorgon* — from gorgos — terrible, fierce, greek myth — any of the three sisters with snakes for hair — so horrible that the beholder was turned to stone — any ugly, terrible, repulsive, terrifying woman. *To gorgonize* — to petrify or stupify with a look. *Gore* — the filth, and blood shed from a wound, clotted blood. *Gorge* — the throat or gullet place to swallow up — stomach of a voracious

³Ibid.

⁴Harmony Hammond, “A Sense of Touch,” *Heresies*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (1981).

⁵Duncan, op. cit.

animal — a feeling of resentment or anger. *Gorgeous* — from gorgos — is beautiful, wonderful, delightful.⁶

A Female Description

Medusa. Celebrated as Medusa the Ferocious. Queen of the Gorgon amazons who lived in Libya during the Bronze Age. Medusa had an abundant and curly head of hair, into which she intermingled black snakes. When Medusa galloped the snakes moved around her head, and some coiled around her neck. But when she joined battle on her mare, all the snakes would rise at once, hissing, furious, agitated with movement, sowing panic among her enemies. Medusa could petrify all those who rose up against her by the look in her eyes. . . . The Gorgons under Medusa, and the Libyans under Athena, were led to fight during the most terrifying battle known within amazon memory. . . . Medusa was killed by Athena, queen of the Libyans. Later on, even when she was celebrated as a goddess, Athena kept on her chest the head of the terrible Gorgon whom she secretly loved, it is said. *Gorgons.* . . . as other amazons. . . . had an amazonian structure without compromise. . . . Long after their splendor has "paled" however, something of their indestructable nature simmers on and from time to time, breaks out of its obscurity.⁷

In the first description, Medusa is found to be ugly, terrible, and repulsive. A connection is suggested between beauty, power, and the woman as monster. But in Wittig and Zeig's description, Medusa is a powerful and active agent — she can turn you to stone with her looks *if she so chooses* — it doesn't just happen because of the way she looks. Medusa is a woman of power, a fighter, and that fighting spirit of hers and the other Gorgons, still appears in women today.

In going out of control, she takes control and becomes more than a representation of that fear of the powerful female. She becomes powerful.

The Medusa. My first etching as an art student was a head of Medusa. I was always fascinated by her, even though I didn't know who she was exactly, mythologically speaking. But somehow, that image of the woman — slightly mad, passionate, with her hair swirling out from her head and tangled, was a powerful image for me — daring, and strong. She seemed intense, right there, focused — exactly who she was — in her own self — a truth and in that sense beautiful.

In art history classes I was always attracted to the femme fatale from the turn

⁶Wester's New World Dictionary, *Second College Edition* (Collins and World Publishing Co., 1974).

⁷Monique Wittig and Sandre Zeig, *Lesbian Peoples: Material for A Dictionary* (Avon, 1976).

of the century. I didn't understand that like the vampire or monster, the femme fatale is a man-made phenomenon created in order to match and control the awesome power of the female who bleeds but does not die. I loved who she was and simultaneously thought I was her. I didn't understand how she was both temptress and victim, how she was a male fantasy created to validate the subjugation of female power. I did not understand that she was supposed to be a monster.

It was her madness. I identified with madness as power repressed/expressed. Madness giving me room outside the stereotypical female role. A woman could be powerful and affect others if she was a bit mad, I thought. Or her powers came out of her madness. Out of control. Am I too powerful? If a woman is mad you can dismiss her seriousness (but not her danger) unlike a mad man who of course is a genius. But then women are dismissed anyway, I intuited, so at least with madness — they just call creative women mad — at least with this you got to go ahead and do what you wanted to do — to be your total self.

Later, when I was making sculptures by accumulating and recycling old rags that women gave me into female "Bags" and "Presences," I wanted my work to be so beautiful that it demanded your attention. A beauty out of the raw fragments of women's lives. A wholeness of survival. In a statement accompanying my first New York exhibition in 1972, I wrote: "I want to demand your attention because I can get it no other way. Is this not part of my women's madness?"⁸ While I meant this ironically, I think it reflects how, even then, making work that reflected women's experience in this culture, work that connected me to a line of female creativity before me, work that was about women taking personal and political space — even then I was uncomfortable with actively taking that space. There was still a part of me, as with many women artists, that did not feel I had the right to make art, to create new and powerful images of women. And so it was easier to associate myself with that disease — women's madness.

When...one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs...then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, or some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Bronte who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift put her to.⁹

And so, like the kudzu vine imported into the south by the patriarchs to control nature (soil erosion) and hide their government research plants and their nuclear reactors...like the kudzu which has now gotten out of control and which

⁸Harmony Hammond, *Statement for exhibition at A.I.R. Gallery, N.Y.C., Jan. 1973.*

⁹Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1929).

wildly wraps around, covers, and feeds off of anything it so chooses, the monster (the mad/creative woman) is out of control (actively creating art in her own image). In going out of control, she takes control and becomes more than a representation of that fear of the powerful female. She becomes powerful.

Bertha Harris, in her article "What We Mean To Say: Notes Towards Defining The Nature of Lesbian Literature,"¹⁰ has examined the image of the monster in literature and film and developed the idea that "the monster which was originally invented to express what ordinary people cannot — feeling...has become the quintessence of all that is female — the female enraged." The monster represents patriarchy's most extreme fear — the woman-identified woman, the lesbian. For like all monsters, the lesbian is powerful in her difference, and is capable of seducing and converting others to her way. Harris looks to film classics such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, and to contemporary monster films such as *Jaws* and *King Kong* as examples of the lesbian in mainstream art — the monster representing the extreme of patriarchal fear, the woman loving women, the woman of power, the woman whose power is part of her beauty, the lesbian.

Keep the ugly edge. The edge is the place of truth and the truth is beauty.

Just as men perceive power in men as beautiful, feminists perceive power in women as beautiful. Only it is a different kind of power. It is a transformative power, a creative power, changing one form of energy into another, rather than power over something or someone. Feminists see this sense of self emanating from within women, this strength, as beautiful, not threatening, but beautiful and good to look at and be. In woman-centered art, women are not shown as weak, sick, or passive. They are not objectified, exploited, or victimized. Nor are they shown in conflict with each other. Instead they appear strong, healthy, active, and comfortable with their bodies and their sexuality. This is in direct contrast to the misogynist attitudes inherent in patriarchal concepts of institutionalized beauty, that is in contrast to images of women throughout the history of Western art.¹¹

In our art we are depicting women's bodies as they really are — in different shapes, sizes, and colors. We are painting women of different ages so that all the freckles, wrinkles, and stretch marks show. Joan Semmel paints close up landscape examinations of her own body — the body of a middle-aged woman stretching, folding, and falling where it will, filling the space of the canvas, warm and sensuous.

¹⁰Bertha Harris, "What We Mean To Say: Notes Towards Defining The Nature of Lesbian Literature," *Heresies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1977).

¹¹This is a restatement of part of a related discussion in Hammond, "A Sense of Touch" (see fn. 4).

It is not the firm, glossy body replica on record album covers or the thin asexual shreds we find in fashion magazines (the slick media version of the 20th century paintings Duncan was talking about). In Semmel's work, and the work of many other women, the feeling is one of a woman's body following a natural cycle, the body as nature itself. Changing, and beautiful in its change.

Women do not depict each other as sex objects to be dominated or possessed, or as objects of any kind. Nikki de Saint Phalle's *Nanas*, Kate Millet's *Naked Ladies*, Betsy Damon's *7,000 Year Old Woman*, and Mary Beth Edelson's Goddess figures are powerful women who take up and fill space. Hardly the ideal of the classical contained nude, or the image of the femme fatal, these women are big — often ten feet tall — out of proportion (out of control?), have lumps and bumps, and seem to be totally here and in touch with their physical selves. They are not passive, but active, full of energy and exuberance, and in this sense both beautiful and erotic.

For many women, a strong female body sense is indicated through their use of materials and the physical manipulation of those materials. I think immediately of Eva Hesse's work, of Lynda Benglis' orgasmic latex and foam pieces, the definite labia imagery of her delicately colored wax pieces, Hannah Wilke's early fragile latex flowers, Amy Hamouda's fiber sculptures, and my own recent wrapped sculptures. In this work abstract female body references are presented in direct powerful ways. All this work shows how in the last ten years, within the context of the feminist movement, women, both lesbian and heterosexual, have been getting in touch with and reclaiming their bodies and are expressing these feelings in their art.

In my own work, what do I think about when I make art? Do I think about making something beautiful? Something powerful? No, I think more about getting an essence, a presence into the work — an honesty and a truth that to me is beauty. Giving form to something that does not exist in the physical sense. A presence, which I would define as an essence made visible. A female presence in all its power. Somehow I always imagine that essence will be somewhat crude and raw, certainly with energy — active. Not existing in previous categories of beauty or non-beauty. Something other, of itself. But no, already that implies too much conscious thinking. All this is more what I know, not what I think.

Rosemary Mayer

LUXE

for Margaret De Coursey

*Là, toute n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté,*

—Charles Baudelaire,
L'invitation au voyage

Does it matter if it's ever been like this before, clearly less anchored than where stars are in the figures and things people once threw in the night sky for company? Ever look for Aurlga? In Room, the Charioteer was a man of stars hung sideways, above or underlying whatever appeared. They saw the chariot, or only the goats and kids, or only the man who held them. He was Erechtheus, Hippolytus, later Bellerophon and Phaeton.

Or it's like an animal's body or a lake or land that knows it's always getting smaller as some abnormal change becomes the greater part of it, or the dead Egyptian who was bankrupt or a criminal, so walled up in a small space with no harp, no boat, no food for his ghost.

The involved knots and the simple ones, most other ones, are loosened or falling open. They've spread pieces as they've disentangled. The nets broke into larger holes with no boundaries for wolves or fish. The weights became pebbles; corks and plastic floats went off with currents.

None of this happens or has very precisely, and it can't be handled elaborately, sensuously, or with much indirection. Tomorrow's already half gone, too much is moving or already missing. It might be 4 a.m. or the tide's up or it's winter and no wood. Time to decide about wolves and boats, and what are reasons people wouldn't kill themselves. One could be pleasures, one of which is beauty.

If you were or weren't hungry, would you stay alive because you were beautiful? To have Porsches or a Fortuny jacket, a Baroque fountain in an old garden, or paintings, wine? How would you choose from a collection of fans or ruby glass? Or travel or money to gamble or drugs? Or, if you were or weren't hungry, would you stay alive because you could? Once she would be bringing in some wood, enjoy how it's enough for a while like money for bills. Watch the flames. Okay, nothing can happen now before tomorrow. Lock up and think what, then? Now there's time when it's safe for sleep, to eat.

Think about the pitcher plants. Curving, hollowed shapes of old bass lutes, great horns, but unradiant, yellowed greens, browned maroons. Where other carnivores exude their sticky moistures, they glow in light, like sundew gleams, and huntsman's horn, over cold yellows and blanched greens, along translucent rods, barely the colors of water in milk. Pitcher plants fill with water and lure their insect food. The clear beads of sun dew's fluids trap for them.

Or jewelweed that grows tiny orchids orange where you hear northern streams on rocks or mud. Give this some time like the pitcher plants' to lure and eat or the jewelweed's to be wet enough. If you take the jewelweed, you can only press it fast and even then it's different, duller colors, no seeds. In the largest vases it dies in the afternoon or while you eat because its water hasn't passed some slate or mud, some wet quartz.

There are many needs for wood and water, for light or heat, or for wind for boats or mills, fountains and wind-towers, or fires, and all their other uses; and sometimes as pleasures, one of which is beauty.

A *ka's* boat could be beautiful now because its shapes and colors are how I expect them or they play with that. To the mind it was buried with, it hopefully worked like the sundew's sticky juices. For whoever looks at pitcher plants, and ghost boats for those who bought them, Keats could have been right, and beauty would be the way things look when they seem to stay alive, like the woman getting wood. The wood's warmth and its expected warmth would be her pleasures; if she had enough, seeing the jewelweed or a pitcher plant could be a pleasure, maybe Keat's beauty, if she had the time.

I hope the ghost boats got them there, but ghost boats are different for me here, not like jewelweed for the wood-gatherer or pitcher plants in almost any sight, not a staying alive called beauty or the pleasure from it, and not even here a possible beauty, but something to use like fire or the sundew's juices, to use around beauty.

Once there was an amazing fire. A lumberyard burned on Halloween in a high wind. Catholic kids watched in white and lace and ribbons after the Church procession on the last night of October. The others under the trees were witches, skeletons, ghosts with pumpkins or bags of candy and apples. We all watched and hoped for the gas station next to the wood to explode and keep it going longer so it would be changing for hours from yellow to orange to blue and violet with the different sounds and heats that all seem opposites of the plays of little waters, are like hurricanes, floods, giant tides or snow winds from the north or over water packed with winter ice. A boat or a fire can keep you alive. Families in China live on boats. Or would a sailboat for pleasure, or the flames in a marble fireplace be more beautiful?

Or there's wind, and storms, fogs, mists, ice, hail, snow, and the different rains of different seasons. Someone once told me I'd sink in the fetid mud that's under the lavenders I like about marsh gas. He also said how rotten it smelled, and that all of weather's turns were problems. Take rain. "You're in bed." "No time for that," or, "You're outside." Or ice storms, when, okay the lights might go out. Chips of ice on the wind cross hardened fields, hit dark trees. Or the trees are encrusted. No wind, but fast opals, rhinestones, diamonds till the middle of morning. If it's May, wet buds freeze, then soften withered. They close the roads; we stay where we are till it melts or slowly drive under heavy, brittle, then dripping branches.

Ice and fire don't work for me like a *ka's* boat when I see it. That dead Egyptian would have had his ghost boat go, passing enormous terrors, spectacles out-of-control, so he could watch from a safe, sure deck, like where I am when I watch fires.

Fire's one of other smaller changing lights. Some are flames from candles, cheap fat or paraffin, or thick beeswax, or green bayberry. Or many tapers' lights, each reflecting many times from the lead-glass pendants of chandeliers that hold them. Torches also change in wind. And the light from pieces of pitch-covered wood once stuck in hearths for cheap light. People with yachts use torches. They have chandeliers and the best candles. There are also the mild pleasures of one candle you could think perfect in a particular holder, if you're in that position, or the one flower at a Chinese feast.

It depends on who's talking. Beauty follows the rules, breaks them, is superfluous grace or necessity, satisfaction or even power. Who watches or listens also makes a difference, and time. Some works make little differences. Description

is one of words' more definite uses, but the images' changes are like beauty and pleasure, no more than barely anchored if at all, and then to what follows from notions of opposites that never really exist, though they lead to ways to continue.

A Persian garden, *pairidaeza*, was wet, cool and green, was inside walls; outside was dry sand and incredible heat where you traveled looking for food, for water and shade. Behind the walls was everything beautiful: luxuriant, ordered growth, every flower and tree, bird, fountain and watercourse the wealthy, empowered builder could get to surround his sheltered pavilions.

Or the ordered gardens of Andre Le Nôtre, opposing the complex circumstances through which their own owners moved outside their gardens, beautifully satisfying signs of power, and pleasure for those who had them built.

To the people who designed the gardens, they were ways to stay alive like this is, maybe pleasures, and to the people who worked on them, they were other ways to stay alive, get food and a place to live. To almost everyone they were also beautiful, in different ways. One was the way that the *pairidaeza* was always beautiful to the men who dug the *ganats* to bring the water to the garden.

They used simple hand-tools for an underground channel from the new garden to water miles away on higher ground. As they cleared the channel, they also dug holes down from the surface to meet the channel to remove debris and be able to breathe. Later, they or others climbed down the holes to make repairs. In their own houses they had no water except in jars the women carried out and back to fill. But they didn't kill themselves. When they saw the garden, all the flowers, all the fruit, the trees amazed them and they were beautiful. When Shah Abbas saw the garden, it was different, in any number of ways. He saw it in varied lights — at night, from a small pavilion with cushions, fruit, strong coffee, or a woman he wanted. Or in brilliant sunlight, to check the colors of flowers or particular plants next to some of the others. Or it was a background, for greeting visitors.

Timur, Tamerlane, ruled two hundred years before Shah Abbas, from Samarquand. He also built gardens and palaces. Clavijo, an envoy from Spain, visited him with the Sultan of Egypt in 1404. They brought a giraffe and ostriches. Timur sat on a dias at the entrance to a palace. There was a fountain with red apples floating in its basin. Timur wore silk and a white hat with a ruby, sat on a small, thick mattress covered with embroidered silk. Other cushions lay behind him.

Clavijo describes the frequent feasts, festivals, receptions held in enclosed gardens or in larger, walled meadows and orchards. When Timur's grandson was about to marry, 20,000 tents were pitched in meadows. Butchers, cooks and bakers worked, bathhouses were built, people came dressed in their best to eat and drink the fruit cakes, meat, wine and mare's milk. Trumpets played, decorated elephants and fine horses paraded. In the center was a wall of cloth 300 yards on a side to surround the royal enclosure atop of which was a square tower of canvas, Timur's

pavilion, supported by 12 poles thick as men and painted blue and gold.

Babur lived a century later, also building palaces and gardens, at Kabul and Agra. He wrote about his *Garden of Fidelity, Bagh-i-Vafa*, at Kabul, of his delight, camping there four days in the fall "when the oranges take color," about the ripening of pomegranates, or when the yellow clover changes color.

In 1598, on the north side of the river at Isfahan, Shah Abbas began to have a garden city built, first a new palace, a mosque, a new audience hall, then the *Chahar Bagh*, a mile-long ribbon of garden — 8 rows of plane trees and poplars with rose hedges, jasmine, other flowers planted out to the edges of the defining walls. Down the center ran a watercourse of stone faced with onyx. The water passed through square and octagonal pools, with intersecting small canals to irrigate the flower and trees. There were paved paths. The whole led to a bridge over the river and more gardens fed by an aqueduct and then a garden inside a wall, the *Hazar Jarib*, a square miles of flowers and trees on 12 terraces fed their water by lead pipes. Different palaces lined the course of the *Chahar Bagh*. *Hasht Bihest* remains, *Eighth Paradise*, in the center of what was the *Garden of the Nightingale*. Most of the *Chahar Bagh* is paved over. The old watercourse lies under a mall lined with shops.

The *ganat* digger would have worked all day in the desert getting water for the garden, rarely seeing the garden. It's different now if you work all day for the money to eat and sleep and have no pain. You don't kill yourself either. You can see pictures of pleasures or beautiful things, or see them displayed for sale; you can go to a museum, read poetry or go to the movies, if you've managed to scrape together the time to find the ways to enjoy them, if you've managed to keep it separate from what you do all day.

Sometimes there's a middle ground. There's a garden said to be a Yazd in Iran, which the same family has kept for two hundred years. It could still be there, could still be supplied by the same *ganat*, 70 km. away, for water for the farm-garden, 24,000 sq.m. with pomegranates, cherry trees and chickens. The family would be living in a two-story pavilion built on a platform in the center of the garden. There could still be the several pools, walks covered with pebbles and bordered by plane trees. They could still have the wind-tower to catch and channel any breeze into the room they would live in in summer, beneath the main pavilion. The curving wall could still keep a pool in shade in winter to make ice to cut and keep for summer. All of this is called a garden.

Or Mt. Vernon, laid out according to elegant plans, always carefully added to, gardens and farmland producing fruit, vegetables, other crops and flowers. Pleasures and beauty can overlap, mingle with security, suggest surfelt. You don't kill yourself. People call cooking an art, and also the making of fine wine, brandies, champagne and cognac. Lots of water grows food and flowers, makes baths and the sounds of fountains. Clothing can be fine silk or warm wool, whenever you need it,

or fine cotton fit well to your body, soft and warm or cool as you need it. Like soft sheets and lots of pillows, blankets in winter or the dishes, glasses, silver, furniture it might pleasure you to look at or find comfortable to use, or vases of flowers where you live, or good music you can just turn on, or heat in winter and cool in summer or silence, if you like it. Then, as you like, all the books you want, or films, or drugs, or dancing, painting, sculptures, whatever keeps you from boredom, keeps you alive.

The wood-gatherer could have found her fire beautiful, and the *ganat*-digger the *pairidaeza*, because it was watered and full of flowers, fruit and trees. If nothing hurts and no needs are left, after the pleasures you know you can get, how do you know about beauty? You learn it when you're in a special group, Shah Abbas's, Louis XIV's, or even George Washington's. Not like the watermen and charioteers. The shahs and kings, the wealthy, some of them had it taken care of, like an always after supper, when you can go out and look at the stars.

Or you could be Andre Le Nôtre, be able to learn to design the Versailles gardens, or Bernini, the fountains at Rome, or Angelica Kauffmann, who decorated rich houses with frescoes, portraits, made miniatures and painted fans. Or Frontinus, who ran the *familia aquarum*, the architects, technicians, inspectors, plumbers and slaves who kept the water running in Rome, who must have taken pleasure in ample water running and thought fountains were beautiful. Versailles was surfeit to the nobles who spent time there. They had elegant small buildings erected, *pavillions*, garden-houses, follies, small chateaux and some town houses, to escape.

Outside gardens, people have hunted wolves for meat and to secure their flocks and herds, set out nets for fish to eat or sell. Then they played melodies on pipes and got drunk, ate a lot and stayed warm. On Chinese harbor boats whole families fish for food to catch and sell. At evening the wife and daughters cook what food they can. They watch the sunset, stay warm or cool, make love or sing songs: Sometimes it's not so simple. You or I can probably stay warm, safe, eat, have clothes, music, sky and weather. The watermen in Rome were the slaves who patrolled and repaired the aqueducts and underground tunnels, fixed the leaks in the lead piping that runs under the city and supplied the fountains, baths, small houses and great palaces. They often inserted illegal pipes into a main and sold that water themselves. The *Meta Sudans* was one of the oldest fountains in Rome. Its name means 'sweating goal-post' and it looked like the Circus goal-posts round which the chariot drivers raced. They were slaves who gave pleasure from speed and violence, like the beauty of fires or floods. They all could have tried to stay alive because they believed in some god, enjoyed their own power or pleasures when they got them, for what went on at games, or to build more fountains, because they thought it was their job. Or, they were afraid it could be worse if they were dead.

On any day you might be able to do what you like. More likely you have to do

some work that you don't care at all about, or hate to do because it's hard or boring, or just not what you want to do. So you wait till it's over to do what you like. What do you do when you do what you like? Pleasures, one of which is beauty. If you don't get to do what you like for a long time, what do you do?

The wood-gathering woman could have worked gathering wood to sell to the glass-houses to burn in their furnaces, but she never would have seen the magnificent things that were made there. She saw her fire, ate her food, maybe she went to a huge church, heard music, played with her children, had a husband and went to bed.

Johann Kunkel worked for the dukes of Lauenburg, then the elector of Saxony, the elector of Brandenburg, and finally Charles XI of Sweden. He was a chemist and alchemist who tried to perfect a new kind of crystal glass, knew how to make many kinds of colored glass and invented a process for producing bright red, ruby glass, *Zinnoberrothe Glas*, which process he never described in his writings but offered to exchange for some other secret or fair reward. He was already well known when he went to work for Friedrich Wilhelm, the Elector of Brandenburg, in 1678. The elector built a glass-house for him on an island in the Hakenon. In 1685 the elector moved the glass-house farther north to the Pfauinsel on the Havel so that Kunkel could work in greater secrecy and isolation. When the elector died in 1688, Kunkel's career as a glass-maker ended. He went to Sweden where the king made him a member of the council of mines. Six months later he returned to Germany and retired on his land at Klosterfeld.

Martin Winter cut and engraved glass to produce *Hochsnitt*, ornament in high relief. The same elector of Brandenburg set up a water-powered cutting mill for Winter to use, but the mill was not completed until the year the elector died, and none of Winter's glass in *Hochsnitt* is known. His brother Friedrich worked in Silesia for Count Christof Leopold Schaffgotsch at another water-driven cutting mill. His goblets are heavy glass-like rock crystal, and thick with scroll work and leaves on their feet, stems, cups and lids. The Schaffgotsch family crest is always in the design. The count wanted no one else to use Winter's technique. He ordered all glass-cutting tools to be taken away from other engravers and cutters.

Keeping remarkable birds in gardens and parks or in elaborate cages was once a pleasure that played with beauty. Sultans, kings and nobles kept ostriches, peacocks, swans, doves, nightingales. In London in the 1850's a bird-seller said:

I have had three parts of my linnets die, do what I might but not often so many. If they all die, all the food they have had is lost. There goes all for nothing the rape and flaxseed for the linnets, the canary and flax for the goldfinches, the chopped eggs for the nightingales and the German paste for the skylarks.

This was when bourgeois homes had birds in fancy cages, like the small gardens in cities where people can be ingenious, arranging trees that grow in tubs, painting walls with fake gazebos, paths to suggest a space or pavilion they haven't got. They set up copies of antique statues or small fountains, bronze sundials from mail-order catalogues, and sometimes it could be called a beautiful place to rest or eat or watch the moon. There are also potted plants on porches and window sills, or flowers in vases inside, or even paper flowers or plastic ones. At night after supper we used to go out to the garden to look at the stars. We learned the patterns and names. We got a telescope to look at the moon, the planets, the colors of double stars.

Their old names slip through history, their patterns change. Had you ever heard of Auriga or seen its bright white brightest star? It's said to mark the place of the she-goat the chariot driver carries and its rising was once considered a sign of rain.

Our garden had all the things we could grow for not too much money. It's like fans. Small grandmothers in Chinatowns use fans, dollar fans for air. Others make them. Angelica Kauffmann painted fans for wealthy women. Fans have been made from ivory, lace, vellum, silk, mother-of-pearl, were gilded, carved and feathered. Elizabeth I of England was given a fan of white feathers with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls, another of swan's down, velvet, seed pearls, silver, rubies, emeralds, gold and mother-of-pearl. There was a language for fans. Holding a fan in the right hand in front of the face meant "Follow me." Now, some people collect them. I look at them in museums, in pictures, in books, I see people use different ones, the dollar ones, on the street and in the subway. I have one of sandalwood.

Each month's moon rises at a different time; each has a different elevation. Wolves watch the moon. The January Moon is the Wolf Moon, not because they watch it only then, they often do, because it, the moon, is low, and hunters once saw the long shadows of wolves on the ice and snow. All the moons still have names though it doesn't seem so dark. Snow Moon in February, Sap Moon in March. Often the moon is called beautiful. Can you stay up late?

Donna Dennis

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE, FEMINISM AND THE PERSONAL

1. Is it possible to identify parallels between architectural and artistic developments of the last few generations?

I am not an architect. I don't know a great deal about architectural developments of the last few generations except as they are manifested in the buildings I see in New York City and in my travels around the United States. I do know that I

Editor's Note — This text was originally published in domus: Monthly Magazine of Architecture, Design and Art, No. 610 (October 1980), as part of a section entitled "The Presence of the past: Architecture of the Eighties? The Venice Biennale tries to judge the achievements of the new generation and tries to make provisions concerning their research. Opinions of Abraham, Ambasq, Barilli, Eleni Constantine, Donna Dennis, Dezzi Bardeschi, Frampton, Johnson, Natalini, M.L. Scalvini, Scully."

have felt antagonistic toward the glass boxes I see on Park Avenue and the low-income housing projects which resemble jails. I do see these buildings as being linked with minimalism in art and my work comes out of a rebellion against both minimal art and form-follows-function architecture.

In the late 1960's I found I wanted to make constructions resembling functionless buildings, buildings which do not function in a practical way but instead function as repositories for and expressions of memories, feelings, spiritual powers, much as the grave houses of certain North American Indians do. I was fascinated by the way people not trained in art, people unselfconscious of artistic traditions decorated their homes, their stores, etc., in a way that made their homes and stores unique and different in subtle ways from every other home and store. I found myself drawn to certain small 19th and early 20th century buildings I encountered in my daily travels around New York City. I would be deeply troubled when an old storefront, mirrored, dingy, renovated many times and bearing scars from each renovation, layers of history, was vacated and then demolished to be replaced by a large, impersonal glass box. I see the life of a building as being analogous to the life of a person. The same basic structure, but altered, enriched over the years. I like small buildings because with small buildings there is more of a possibility that each person whose life has been touched by that building (living there, working there) will have in turn touched that building in a way that is visible and felt. It can be as subtle as a calendar placed one day on a painted wall and removed many years later, leaving a pale rectangle. I am talking about surface incident, about texture, about the unpredictable, about the personal.

Recently, I have seen photographs of the work of certain architects that excites me because it shows those qualities I value and admire and find stimulating. I am talking about the work of Michael Graves, Fred Fisher and Thane Roberts, Frank Gehry, George Ranalli, others. I feel we share a concern that something had been lost from modern art and modern architecture and are working in various ways toward the common end of returning that lost quality to the world we live in.

2. In your opinion, has the period of avant garde exploits come to an end? In what way or in what direction has the avant garde evolved into the new phenomena labelled trans, post, etc.?

Frankly, the idea of avant garde, post-garde, trans-garde is ludicrous to me. The attempt to be avant garde (or any other-garde) seems filled with empty ambition and restrictions ("...that can't be done because it has already been done, and *that* can't be done because *it* has already been done"). Instead of celebrating the infinite possibilities open to the human mind and spirit, the picture gets narrower and narrower, more concerned with rules than with possibilities.

My real breakthrough came in 1970 when I threw away the art magazines and the self-consciousness about art history and recognized in myself a determination to celebrate my individuality and the uniqueness of my times. I was and still am particularly (but not exclusively) interested in reaching other women. My decision to break away from the minimal and conceptual work I saw around me to turn in a more personal direction was very much a part of my involvement in the feminist movement. Out of my experiences reading the works of Betty Freidan, Germaine Greer and others and participating in consciousness raising groups came the courage to value my own life enough to take it as my subject matter.

It has recently occurred to me that my interest in a kind of architecture generally considered unimportant, subway stations and tourist cabins, relates very directly to my feminism. Focussing on "humble" architecture for me is very much like the feminist movement focussing on the lives of women. The message is: Look again, for there is far more to be seen than was ever imagined before.

3. So called artistic forms seem increasingly to be developing a kind of uniformity: architects adopt painting techniques and go back to drawing; artists construct architecture and turn to three dimensional materials, etc. Both subsequently develop a taste for decoration, the pleasure of a certain textuality in the work, etc.

I began as a painter but soon felt dissatisfied with easel painting. I wanted my work to show the passage of time. In the mid-60's I began to make large collage works which incorporated mirrors and recessed and projected areas. As the viewer moved, in space (and in time) from side to side, the view changed. But the works no longer involved painting; they looked minimal.

In the late 60's I yearned to paint again, to use my hands more, to make work that was more personal and unpredictable, that was filled with more color and surface incident. I began to make little collages involving a lot of painting and detail. I found I was looking at small, older buildings. I began to remember games I'd played as a child, revolving around places I made . . . of snow, of boxes, of grasses, of blankets thrown over card tables. I read Plato who said, "Should we not say that we make a house by the art of building and by the art of painting we make another house, a sort of man made dream produced for those who are awake?"

I made my first "false front" works as a way of incorporating my love of multi-dimensions and my love of painting and drawing in the same piece. I made the first "false front" as tall as I am because it was about me, my body and my life. All the rest of the work has come from there.

Carla Liss

BEAUTY AND STRENGTH

A new art store/art gallery has opened that's an offshoot of an older store which sells mainly Fluxus and which has become as big as Bloomingdales and the center of the whole art world. It's been taken over by a new very slick owner who makes it a huge success. Barbara Ess is involved with him too; he's pushing her band Static. She tells me how great he is, how much he's doing for artists, etc.

Meanwhile I hear that my pieces aren't selling at all. I finally go to this store to see. A woman collector is there buying lots of stuff. She sits in a chair like in a shoe store with all this art merchandise spread around her. She is looking at my FluxCatKit: a medical diagram of a cat's musculature with long hatpins sticking out of it with various colored cat furs on the heads of each pin. I'm surprised

because I didn't think CatKit was still in existence as there was only one prototype made which I refused to allow George Maciunas to expand into an edition as he wanted to include a sadistic rendering of a cat on the cover. The collector is about to buy this piece when the salesperson tells her it's not for sale and the maker isn't really Fluxus. I say, "It's my piece and it is for sale." The saleslady has ultimate authority. I realize they've done this with all my work. This is the only distribution outlet in the city and the model for all others in the entire world. I ask why I'm banned and she says I was voted out of Fluxus.

I go to find the owner to ask him about this. He's a goodlooking guy who looks exactly like my first lover, Steve Resnick. He's been doing great things for the other artists like Paik, Larry Miller, etc. But he's very mean to me and says, "You're out. That's all." I ask further and he says he instituted a vote and I was voted out. I think how the other members did it and am not surprised since I may have set myself up for it by writing in Rühé's big Fluxbook that my involvement was primarily about my friendship with George, that the editions were corollaries to my main work, that Fluxus is about jokes. But they've behaved commercially in their own interests and this guy Resnick is the evil genius behind it. I keep asking him why he's doing this and he keeps ignoring me, refuses to talk to me. He goes upstairs to his inner sanctum. Rock type high security scene is guarding him. Like at the Mudd Club, heavies are posted on all the doors. I finally do get to him and he immediately starts making out with me. Even though he's banning my work, kissing him feels incredibly sweet. Suddenly I see Lynne there and her presence reminds me of what's going on, i.e., that he's a sadist and I shouldn't make out with him. I start to fight him vigorously. I put my hands in his eyes, he still tries to make out with me. I scream how I want to punch him out and at the same time realize I'm not physically strong enough. Physically he's my superior and also he has these gross guys I once knew guarding him. One is a sailor who he's raised into a successful artist who will do whatever he says. It's a feminist issue, I'm just not physically strong enough to beat him.

Meanwhile he has a camera which he puts between my legs near my crotch. He's still forcibly making out with me and then he presses the camera button and it turns out the camera is a new deadly weapon. He's planned this whole make out scene to make me die. He's already shot it up my crotch and I can't resist. I find myself going numb. He's shot this chemical into me that's fatal. I'm dying and can't stop myself. I fight it and fight it. Lynne helps me. Barbara is there too. Finally I get away from him. Although I've been impregnated with this stuff and am possibly going to die, I still chase him and try to kill him. I say to the whole group of people in the store that he runs, "Don't listen to him, he faked this Fluxus vote but my new work is really incredible. Leo Castelli is seeing it tomorrow and you know how hard it is to even get an appointment with him. You'll see, you

were all wrong." I flash on my new piece and how beautiful it looks hanging up.

*Meanwhile I'm still trying to get to him to convince him to change his mind about banning my works. High security is still guarding him. I can't get upstairs to where he is. At the same time I feel myself floating out of my body and make a tremendous effort to stay in my body and in this life just long enough to get to him. He finally comes downstairs. I say, "See, I'm not dead yet you idiot. As a matter of fact I'm just about to be reborn. This is only one of my many lives." However he has banned my works and has shot this fatal stuff into me and it's a huge effort to keep holding onto life and keep fighting him. But I say again, "You can't kill me that easily, I'm like a cat and this is just one of my many, many lives."**

As we know, there is no longer an external value system determining standards of beauty, validity or morality in life as well as art. In a valueless, shifting culture in which the primary standard is material success, criticism creates values and determines marketable trends. This isn't exclusive to 1982, Balzac wrote about this in the early half of the 19th Century. In his time it was shifting values due to the revolutions that gave the population its insecurity and the critics their power.

Idealistically one wants to believe in a time when artists made works of beauty that inspired critics to write, when artists set trends that critics interpreted. However, in transitional times and during a reactionary wave it's not surprising that we look even more to criticism for ultimate "meanings." The power of the written word has always been great; accumulation or mass determines quality. The more relativity and change the culture feels (and the more freedom) the more the longing for the illusion of external truth; an old lesson of existentialism. The perversity of human nature is always wanting the other. This sadomasochistic tendency has to do with the fact that the pleasure and pain centers in the human brain are side by side, different from other species where they're placed farther apart. Thus the continual desire for the opposite. In a tight economy we look to traditional representationalism and glitter, in boomtime we looked to abstract expressionism and the breaking down of traditional "meanings" and systems of aesthetics.

And one of the truths that contemporary critics have oftentimes voiced is that political art cannot be synonymous with beautiful art. This is an elementary attachment to form and content. If politics are ugly then so must be their expression in art. An example from my own work (and this is an harangue): a political piece which was physically hazardous for me to make was called by one critic too aesthetic to be sincere. This was *Secrets of Three Mile Island* (1980), a series of 42 X-rays shot in Harrisburg and Middletown, Pa. after the accident. The idea was to use radiation photography to photograph every day objects, the objects

used by the local population that was so hideously dosed with radiation. One of the points being that low level radiation is invisible and therefore impossible to record; impossible to determine safety levels; invidious in its invisibility.

It so happens that X-rays are beautiful, or can be, and in working with the idea of using transparency as a metaphor for seeing through the material object to a dematerialized concept I happened to create a luminous work. I found (and still find) this shedding of light wonderful. And the luminosity had a direct relation to the fact that the piece was not created solely as an anti-nuclear statement but a statement about human evolution and the interior life. The objects X-rayed are exhibited on a grid that reads from bottom up: 1) nature, the ground of all being, now threatened, 2) silverware, denoting food, that most directly poisoned, 3 & 4) doors and windows, atomic leakage, and at the same time entrances/exits, light/hope, 5) fence, private property, capitalism, the system that spawns nuclear reactors and other atrocities lethal to the democracy they supposedly serve and 6) television, media control, that opiate of the masses which voices the capitalist ideals and keeps the population glued to a false panacea rather than active in developing its psychic resources. The human brain, all our brains, are less than a millimetre away from the development of near total telepathy.

This piece received much favorable critical attention, due mainly to its timeliness, however its aesthetic qualities and their implications were ignored or dismissed and it remained in an amorphous category, a fluke. It didn't fit into the critical credo of the polarity between beauty and political art.

In *Transparent Matters* (1981) I further explored the refinements of X-rays' particular aesthetic and technical processes; X-rays' ability to work as a metaphor for "seeing through" the subject matter; seeing through the representational image of the picture and its commonly ascribed meaning (i.e., a film can is signified to us through language as something with a specific meaning in daily life) to the particles which comprise it and the greater abstraction from which everything, including our system of "meanings," derives.

It is bizarre living in a time so circumscribed that a numinous statement can't carry its own weight. Beauty was once thought to be one with truth, before the Industrial Revolution and our subsequent assaults on nature. But modern aesthetics which is so influenced by technology forgets that nature which created everything, including the humans who created technology, and which will in some form survive all our assaults, nature, the primary creative force, is the ultimate strength. It is bizarre living in a time when art must mirror the metastructure of a hideous culture, and where the aesthetic has shifted to one in which beauty is regarded as something denoting weakness rather than strength.

I am working in the fruit and vegetable section of a supermarket where I am employed making mashed potatoes. Joan Simon is there with a light beard on her face. She's also working in this place for very low pay and I invite her over to my section. I realize that it takes two hours to make 1 or 2 cups of potatoes and that it's impossible to earn any money here but it's the only job around.

Then there is a fire drill and we all must evacuate the supermarket in the rain and go to a shelter down the block. I have a portfolio with my X-rays in it and I hesitate to take them out in the rain in case they should get ruined. But I'm too tired from working to find a plastic bag to wrap them in and so I just take them as they are.

*After the fire drill we all get in a car and are driving through the countryside from town to town. Outside of the city hall in each town we pass through, I see very long lines of people. I ask someone in my car what they're all waiting for and she says, "The people are waiting for deoderant."**

**Dreams from Nightclub Part 1 & 2 (1980-82) is a continuing dream project. In Part 1, C.L. reads her dreams to the people in them, this was recorded on double channel video; monitor 1: C.L. reads dreams, monitor 2: the people in the dreams respond. In Nightclub Part 2, C.L. asked the audience of Part 1 to write down their dreams for a year which are then being enacted on film.*

IV
THE DISMANTLED SIGN
AND
THE TRANSCENDENTAL PROP

Ann Wilson

PERFORMED ASSEMBLAGE FOR ABSTRACT THEATER

Picasso said once that he did not draw from nature but from the works of other artists in other eras.

Juxtaposition of images from various epochs has been my principal inspiration. I directed a Fra Fillipo Lippi Virgin figure in Madam Charpentier's Neo-Classical Interior.

I first perceived this use of juxtaposition as a construction matrix through Andre Malraux's book, *The Voices of Silence* in the early 1950s.

Koomaswami's book detailing the relationship of Indian carving to Greek carving gave me a detailing of image shading from culture to culture, in the way Persian miniature painters taught Tibetan Tanka painters.

Ad Reinhardt used to have a lecture with photos he took and collected from all over the world of hands from every culture, every era.

The perception of visual form is understood more abstractly when the context

of style and era is changed by interjection of multiple images.

The assemblage of a combination of expressive elements was explored by the constructivist, Rodchenko, in 1922. The development of montage, the dissection of images to produce a metaphor comes from the same part of the brain as dreaming. It became increasingly more important for me to make theatrical metaphors that were stationary in three-dimensional form.

At first the images, a bird juxtaposed on quilts, were painted. Then the metaphors, a Stag in a Boat, St. Eustace's Vision, became three-dimensional, a life size still life; the making of enlarged still lives, in assemblage from out of real objects, usually old, bearing the stamp of use, became the composition.

At first I moved these large still lives in my studio and contemplating them, drew and painted them.

Cezanne used to prop up plates and *construct* fruit and vegetables at odd angles to get perspective and structural relationships.

The metaphor of the assemblage itself began to be the work, and at that time in the early seventies I began very much to want to animate these assemblages in some way.

These visual assemblage sculptures were dream metaphors, affecting me as the images in dreams. The assemblages were powerful and self-contained.

I felt the need for more structure, more architecture, to build spaces. At first these spaces were places to house the assemblages, using identical twins as Marät in a Greek revival room, but then the spaces began to be the metaphor.

Gordon Craig's screens seemed to be such a structure, a space, architectural, but having an atmospheric involvement with form, light and shadow that lent itself to many kinds of content. I felt impelled to build them, and although many people said the screens had been impossible even for Craig, I built them. Two other spaces, Vincent Van Gogh's bedroom at Arles and Petrouchka's room were built as spaces that were about content in which could be expressed many, many different meanings with metaphors from artists' lives.

It was while enlarging the Madame Charpentier room to ten feet and a quatrocento room to twenty feet that I first became aware of the way formal elements abstracted through scale enlargement. While building and painting the Van Gogh room in the third dimension I became aware of his use of blocks of solid color, red, green, blue and the neutralizers ochre and pink. This taught me of the important structural linkage between Van Gogh and Mondrian. That awareness occurred to me in life size scale when I understood the amount of red that the real blanket took, the amount of blue a wall took or the exact, almost sculptural, relationship of a painted shape to a shadow in life size.

The architectural space was a three-dimensional atmosphere for me. It was very important to paint on the three-dimensional forms. It was almost as if I created

them to engage in the act of painting life-size still life. The still life had become larger than the painter.

I am sure this environmental scale can also be attributed to the fact that in our prefabricated, industrial culture very little choice is left for the visual person in the scale and actual construction of the environment we live in. I have always been attracted to the Japanese tea houses built specially for the scale and physical function of the ceremony within. There is something kinetically satisfying in the arrangement of architectural scale that fits the activity it is designed for. I am sure the satisfactions of ritual in an Indian Kiva had to do with the size of the body, the number of persons and the relation of the circular underground space to the ritual gesture performed there.

Ritual gestures in Greek sculpture, Romanesque and Gothic sculpture, Tibetan incantations, the Mass, American Indian dance and the Japanese tea ceremony all attract me because they function very precisely and formally in a defined space, often with specific objects. I next want to build enlarged specific ritual objects for gesture.

The Noh theater movements and Kabuki as well as the American Indian dance and aboriginal dance on the visual level involve me in many of the same spatial considerations as painting and sculpture. Ritual movement and gesture slows down precise movement designed to communicate a metaphor and a power. I began a study of ritual gesture and directed performers to move with these visually and emotionally in their minds.

The concentration of energy such gestures communicate and the possibility of designing formal space for physical gestures related to the size and shapes in the painted and constructed environments greatly inspire me.

Designed animated ritual movements become the next step in my structures. The structures needed to be animated by moving forms, by people making physical movements that related to the scale and interior space and content of the environments.

At first it was a simple figure from art history, a quattrocento Virgin animating the painted environment. Of course, the costume and in some cases the bodies had to be painted, and the movements were designed according to the scale of the interiors.

The painted form itself choreographed many of the movements. If there was a vertical, I would give the performer a vertical, or its direct opposite, a horizontal gesture. Spatial depth with various performers and synchronized and parallel movement permitted me to design in space as never before.

With performance, lighting becomes an important level of design making the human assemblage more sculptural, emphasizing these horizontal and vertical gestures.

I like the difference between hard, exact lighting and twilight shadows when the performer almost fades into the environment. These physical components form a shifting assemblage.

Dialogue from process came at first, my own voice directing movements, move your arm left, now higher, just there, parallel to the horizontal in the painted wall, hold on a ten count and drop arm quickly.

I never was held or lifted into any kind of creative state by most Broadway theater. Plot, meaning and developed action never affected me as deeply as Gertrude Stein, Joyce or Proust. Meaning according to a preconceived plot did not inform me as much as content and the possibility of shifting physical movement which could create the dream-like metaphoric understanding that feeds my perceptions. I like many interpretations of concept, and find ten people bring ten interpretations to content material. Most avant work lacked content as most professional theater seemed to demand preconceived meaning. I was seeking content with the possibilities of multiple interpretation. With *Butler's Lives of the Saints* I began to explore a dialogue of content from visionary writers and saints. My objective was the vision metaphor and not literal meaning. I began to make montage scripts of my own writing and research material to create a particular metaphor. Just as I constructed the assemblages I constructed the libretto. Van Gogh wrote that his room at Arles was the *place* of his dreams. It became necessary to make statements and conversations within the environments that completed the dream assemblages. The figures awoke, the environments had created a life of their own. I think of these works as animated still lives. These figures making a juxtaposition of metaphors, sometimes human, sometimes architectural, come out of a visual context into an animated space in timed sequences. I added music to increase and define the audio atmosphere of what now had become performance works.

I am using the theatrical dimension as another level with which to work with Cezanne's old time classical theories about the triangle, the square and the circle.

The animation of environment with performance also enlarges the dimensions of my assemblage juxtapositions, giving me the options of movement and speech in time. These physical components form a shifting assemblage much like Calder's wonderful circus used to be when the various figures were animated. I have been much affected by Cocteau's films and his use of the visual metaphor to present a psychological situation in mythic form.

I do not expect my performance works to be attended as literal plays, any more than I expect abstract expressionism to be realistic painting. I am interested in making abstract performance; the medium for me is the content.

I am not interested in plot or building a narrative progression in dialogue. I am not interested in action in the conventional sense.

The action for me is as still and as moving as spending an afternoon watching the ocean and sky change. I am after the interior metaphor, the kind of interior change that occurs when I take Communion or experience a religious initiation. The plot, if you will, is hidden in the experiencing of a metaphor as a connection with some larger spirit, sometimes, with luck, found hanging about the images in various eras of art history. I do not feel responsible for what the audience does or does not experience because Agnes Martin told me she did not feel responsible for her paintings since everyone's brain composed them differently from whatever state they brought with them to the works. This is how I feel about these performance works. The audience can supply any plot and action they need from their own reactions to the metaphors.

The assemblage performers often create different meanings for me while I am building them or rehearsing them than those which I originally intended. When this happens I feel like the works are alive, with a life of their own, informing me. When a dialogue or image I've created tells me something new, something I hadn't perceived yet, I feel a new life. That is when these performance assemblages are a success: when they abstract themselves from me in my perception.

The unfamiliarity and the changed nature of visual metaphors taken from history is created by the tension pulling images out of their original orbit and placing them in an abstract composition with other metaphors. Thus the Stag goes into the Boat.

Abstract composition loosens the metaphors tied to any one historic period and more important, loosens the ties to the categories of art, i.e., sculpture, dance, painting and theater. Of course, my insight in choosing metaphors has to do with the feelings and experiences arising out of the historic era I am in.

In 1919 Kurt Schwitters invented the word "Merz" to separate his art from previously existing categories.

Merz was expounded from its original painting context into a variety of different directions: into drawings and poems that were comprised of distinct material units, into theater and architecture.

It was my desire not to be a specialist in one branch of art, but an artist. My aim is the Merz composite art work, that embraces all branches of art in an artistic unit.

Walter Gropius writes in 1919 that "art's ultimate goal was the creative idea of the cathedral of the future which will once more encompass everything in one form, architecture and sculpture and painting. You should smash the frames of 'Salon art' that are around your paintings, go into the buildings, engrave your ideas on their naked walls — and build in fantasy without regard for technical difficulties."

In building from past fragments possessing an internal and personal signifi-

cance largely irrespective of their original functions, the focus of attention is on the object itself. The scene and dialogue is the object.

The meaningfulness of individual fragments hardly arises, objects, people, and words contribute to a whole variety of complex and evocative moods. An iconographical play takes place with historic sources that echo similar spatial character built up around a specific theme.

Constructivist sculpture, Mayan floor plans and Noh theater tracking all relate visually due to a spare and classic geometry based on concise spatial movement, and geometric line and precise mathematical placement. These forms lend themselves as a support system for ritual gesture which comes in fragments from the Noh and images of ritual from Eleusis and Pythagorean geometry. It is an *international art without categorical boundaries*.

In 1913 Rozanova Morgunou executed a number of collage works in which he obviously regarded space as a creative ingredient: moreover, it was this "intuitive" use of space which formed the basis of his system of spatial realism, the conception of visual art as *a spatial culture*.

The same is true of the desire of Tatlin for tactile, plastic space, to put the eye under the control of touch.

Popova in *The Magnanimous Cuckold* created *visual time* with her rotating color wheels. She broke through the essentially decorative use of "scenery" with concrete spectacle; in 1923 she introduced *real objects* to the stage, a motorcycle, a car, a field telephone.

Popova's progression was from the two dimensional painting to the object in theatrical space.

Extending into metaphoric space Lavinsky and Krutikous built cities in the air and Infante made environments of artificial systems of space.

The Constructivists went into theatrical design in 1921 because many artists were feeling that the exclusive concern with formal qualities was insufficient in a society oriented increasingly towards industrial organization and production.

In 1980 retracing certain steps taken early in the century we are trying out concepts that will function in a society which must orient its ideas of industrial organization and production with available energy resources.

International metaphoric forms are universal images which can be used both in personal and communal spaces.

Bernard Berenson writes such metaphors for my script.

Again and again we crossed wide rivers of hardened lava wriggling down like snakes from Etna, the recent ones sinister in their unrelieved blackness, the older ones covered with yellow broom, the flower chosen by Leopardi as symbol of the precarious condition of human life.

Alexander Alland, Jr.

BEAUTY IS NOT THE QUESTION

Conceding that initial responses to successful works of art are emotional rather than intellectual we cannot assume that "beauty," except in some vague metaphorical sense, is the force that produces aesthetic pleasure. There are too many counter examples. To mention just one, there is a long section in Louis Ferdinand Celine's *Death on the Installment Plan* that documents a trip across the English Channel in which seasickness is described in graphic (and, at least for some) disgusting detail. Yet the description works as literature. It is structurally powerful. The reader is caught up not only in the experience, but in the writing of it.

Art is based on the combined transformations of reality and aesthetic structures. These interact with one another to set off conscious and unconscious

associations that have both formal and intellectual content. While successful artists must find their own aesthetic means the raw material of art can be found both within and beyond one's own culture. Certain formal properties have been discovered and rediscovered in different times and places. These are artistic universals. The artist takes from a bag of cultural, historical, and universal human resources and plays the aesthetic game by transforming already existing patterns into original forms of expression.

Artists are very pragmatic about the way they borrow concepts and forms from one another. The same pragmatism is seen in the way whole art traditions exhibit patterns of experimentation with foreign styles. Much has been made of the fact that late nineteenth and early twentieth century European artists "discovered" and integrated African sculpture and Japanese wood-block prints into their own developing aesthetic concepts and pictorial constructions. It is also well known that Japanese art is based on early Chinese and Korean models imported from the continent and refined locally into what we know as the Japanese aesthetic. Among traditional societies (of the type studied by anthropologists like myself) art styles have also been borrowed frequently and transformed into localized forms of expression.

Endogenous inspiration is, of course, also a major source of artistic creativity. Artists do not care where solutions to their aesthetic problems come from as long as these solutions are personally satisfying and, ultimately, work with an audience. The artist, in any culture, is an explorer of ideas and feelings that are manifested in aesthetic form which is also, in the last analysis, some statement about reality.

Although we are impressed by known cases of stylistic borrowing we are less aware that there exists certain formal principles governing the way art is made that have been discovered and rediscovered by artists independently of cultural or personal contact. These principles are particularly interesting because they reveal something about how art works *qua* art regardless of its cultural and historical context.

The most important of these formal principles is also the best known. It is the process of metaphorization in which new and successful connections are created between two or more previously separate domains. Metaphorization lies at the base of both creative language and art and unites them. I do not wish to treat metaphor here since its place in language and art has been discussed at length by countless authors. It is important, however, to point out that the existence of metaphor, as a central part of aesthetic transformation and language use, has tended to confuse us into thinking that art and language are different versions of the same communications system or to believe that art, itself, is some kind of language. It is important to remember that art and language have different functions and operate in different ways. In Wittgensteinian terms, art and language are both communication games.

They share a family resemblance, but they are not identical. Proper language use (although never fully achieved) aims at the unambiguous transmission of single, specifically linear messages. Art works, at least, in part, because it contains a high degree of ambiguity that serves to draw the observer into communication with the artistic product, itself, rather than with the sender of the artistic message. Language, in its perfect sense, is unemotional (even when a message may arouse emotions) while art plays upon the emotions, exciting them through its formal elements.

All of the arts use nonmetaphorical transformation devices that do not occur in *normal* language use. Such devices are closely linked to the power art has to arrest attention and to move us through a simultaneous breaking and reforming of connections between it and the real world. In what follows, I shall discuss a small set of formal transformational devices that occur in the art of a wide range of cultures. I do not claim that these devices are exhaustive but merely offer them as examples to illustrate some of the ways the arts exploit nonlinguistic mechanisms.

1. Change of scale

The anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, has suggested in his book *The Savage Mind*, that successful visual art is always a miniaturization of some real person, thing, or event. As an example he uses a small delicate portrait by the French sixteenth century artist, Clouet. Anticipating the criticism that monumental paintings also exist, Levi-Strauss counters that such paintings depict even more monumental events. Thus, he says, the *Last Judgment* of Michelangelo is a miniaturization of the biblical event depicted. Such a statement, of course, merely obscures the problem at hand and is unfalsifiable. What Levi-Strauss appears to miss is the fact that miniaturization is one type (among many types) of artistic transformation. An *increase* in scale, for example, can also generate aesthetic impact. Thus photographs of very small objects (either from the natural world — insects are one case — or from the realm of art, itself) when enlarged to massive proportions often have a striking aesthetic effect.

Very small and very large art works can be found in the aesthetic production of several of the world's cultures. The Inuit (Eskimos) are fond of carving miniature animals out of small pieces of bone and ivory. The Ashanti of Ghana are well known for their gold-weights of cast bronze made by the lost wax process. These weights are made in both realistic and geometric forms. The former include a wide range of animal and human representations most of which are associated with Ashanti proverbs. My own collection of these weights, which number about 40 objects, can fit into my cupped hands. Small cast figures in gold and silver, as well as pottery, are known from all the civilizations of the New World and are particularly common among the pre-Columbian cultures of Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Minia-

ture carvings are also found in many parts of Polynesia. In many cases these small objects are made with exquisite care and display fine craftsmanship and control. The very act of making something so small so well will evoke the artist's hand in the creative act. One of the best examples of this effect can be seen in a tiny rosary bead in the Cloisters (part of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art). The bead, which measures under two inches in diameter, contains a high relief carving of the Crucifixion. Behind the figures on the Cross we can make out the miniscule forms of a city in the distance!

Monumentally large statues of Buddah are a favorite theme in Japanese and Chinese art. Massive Egyptian statues are justly famous as are large stone monuments in the New World (particularly the huge Olmec heads, Toltec stone statues, and Maya sculptures). We are also struck by the massive stone carvings of Easter Island. On a somewhat smaller scale, but still large, are the masks of the Dogon of Mali, as high as 20 feet. Gigantic masks are also found in the Pacific culture area, particularly in the outlying islands of Papua-New Guinea. The so-called totem poles of the Indians of the Northwest Coast of the United States and Canada as well as large carved house-posts provide yet another example of massive scale in art.

2. Exaggeration and underplaying

Another favored aesthetic transformation involves the exaggeration or reduction of certain features of a represented object, animal, or person. This can range from the frankly caricatural to a subtle emphasis on one or a few significant parts. Iroquois false-face masks represent gods who, through their foolishness or clumsiness, slammed themselves into such natural barriers as trees or mountains. These "caricature" masks display twisted noses, deformed mouths and bulging eyes. Art styles from all over the world (New Guinea is a particularly good example) emphasize eyes and/or noses to the point where other features may disappear or become insignificant. In the carving from much of West Africa, important people are made larger than ordinary individuals appearing in the same figural groups. This device, we know, was also used in ancient Egyptian art. Masks of the Dan of Liberia are characterized by the reduction of eyes to round holes while the nose and the mouth are depicted through a simple stylization. In the Noh theatre of Japan, props are reduced to a suggestive minimum while costumes are lush. Noh masks range from the enigmatic semi-smile of a woman's face to an exaggerated grimacing devil. Those Noh actors who appear without masks spend years learning to present their faces in mask-like stillness. The Zen garden, regarded as an art form by both Japanese and Westerners, is based on planned understatement about order in the natural world.

3. *Partial showing*

A common, almost magical, transformation involves the making of a complete and complex object that is never completely seen, at least as it was conceived by the artist who made it. This device is a second order transformation since the emotional impact of the object comes from knowing *something* of what it is but at the same time *knowing* that it cannot be totally seen. Such objects are only fully known through inference and, of course, part of their meaning comes from the impossibility of really knowing them. The most famous example of this type of artistic (and religious) transformation is the Inca lines from Peru. These huge geometric forms cutting across the landscape for hundreds of meters can only be seen in their totality from the air. This has led some to the silly speculation that the Inca lines were constructed by creatures from outer space. No such hypothesis is necessary if we realize the intellectual-aesthetic impact that partial showing can produce in those who know something of the artistic game that is being played in this case.

In his book, *Primitive Art*, Franz Boas cites several other examples of partial showing in objects made on a smaller scale than the Inca lines. Boas points out, for example, that complex geometric designs carefully worked out by Northwest Coast Indians lose their coherence when the objects on which they are drawn are folded into their final shape. A full appreciation of the original design was possible only for the artist. In the same culture area there are several objects of magical value that are made and then hidden from view except during special ceremonies. Even when such objects are used, however, they are not completely seen because they appear only in poor light and in rapid motion. Spectators exposed to these objects during ceremonies only get fleeting glances at these complexly carved and painted forms.

Ceremonies in general that occur at night lit only by the light of a fire and which are populated with spirit figures wearing elaborate costumes and masks can only be partially seen. The circumstances of showing adds to the mystery of the event but also forces involved spectators to strain their perceptive capacities in order to see as much as they can. Such straining converts them into participants even if they began only as members of the audience. This effect can be produced in secular performances as well as in religious ritual. The device of under-lighting was used similarly by Merce Cunningham several years ago in his dance event, *Winterbranch*. The performers in this piece carried flashlights which were used intermittently to partially light the action on stage. At one point the audience was blinded by a bright spotlight turned directly on them. Throughout, one had to make a heroic effort to see the performance and was thus forced to participate in it.

4. *Change of time frame*

A change of time frame is a transformation generally limited to ritual performances in traditional societies, but which, at least by Robert Wilson, has been transferred to secular events. Rituals in traditional societies often take several days to run their full course. Generally, they take place at night or occupy long portions of both day and night. Frequently, mythical events are portrayed in a dramatic form that unfolds at a snail's pace. In addition these sacred events interrupt the pace of secular daily life which is suspended or partially suspended during the course of the ceremony. Contrasting frames are thus set up between secular and sacred time.

Wilson's week-long pieces or even his all night events exploit several of these time distortions. When a piece runs for a week or even for just one night, fatigue alone changes the relationship between the spectator and the performance. One can yield to sleep, but if this recourse is rejected the eventual degree of effort expended just to stay awake draws the spectator into the performance. In addition to fatigue the necessary concentration on an event of this type, played out in a defined space over an extended time period, acts to alter the spectator's perceptions of the event as well as his or her sense of participation in it. The preponderance of slow movements as well as endless repetition in Wilson's theatre pieces (repetition is another transformation device) also distort time. In *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* the first act, which takes place on a beach, was framed by the imperceptibly slow progress of a prop turtle that somehow (one could not perceive the actual movement) got from one side of the stage to the other!

5. *Transformation of the banal*

Any of the visual, verbal, or performing arts can take its inspiration from anything in the world. Sometimes artists consciously or unconsciously use only the most banal activity or thing as the central conceptual basis of their art work. In traditional societies the use of the banal is usually limited to certain ritual performances, but sometimes sacred *objects* (difficult to separate from art because of their parallel place in ritual and belief and because of the way they are treated and revered) are totally mundane things transformed only through magical acts. Thus in West Africa one often comes across bottles or other discarded objects as central figures in shrines. Sacred meaning is attributed to these objects as it is attributed to carved statues. Nothing happens to them physically, but they become something more than what they originally were when they appear in a sacred context. The same kind of transformation has similar roots in secular modern and post-modern art in the West. The placing of ordinary "found" objects in art museums by artists is a well known event in our own art history. These objects become art through

contextualization in an art museum. In their new place, as Levi-Strauss has pointed out, unseen aspects of form (always there, if latent) emerge.

The transformation of the mundane into art can arise in a totally different way, however. Modern dance in America has emerged out of a series of self-reference points all of which comment on the development of dance since ballet. In many ways modern dance is an art that feeds on the rejection of previous forms. Thus much of the movement vocabulary of early modern dance can be read as a reaction to and a rejection of ballet. The same is true of post-modern dance which reflects a rejection of the growing formality of modern dance. The wearing of anti-costumes (the sweat-suits favored by many post modern dancers, for example) and the use of ordinary movements (walking, running, sitting) with a minimum of transformation are common devices. The movements become dance by their placement in the context of performance and by their use in repetitive patterns, but the fact that these movements and costumes are chosen over others can only be explained in terms of the historical context in which these dance forms occur. The recent return (by some dancers) to a more lyrical form of choreography is not unexpected at all when we consider the kind of negative self-reference that operates in the dance world. This is not meant as a criticism of post-modern dance. Much of it is exciting and the exploration of everyday movement can yield vital dance, but it is important to understand how this kind of movement emerged as part of a historical process.

6. *Art as self-reference*

What I have just said strongly suggests that post-modern dance (and theatre too) can best be understood, at least, in part, as art reflecting on itself. The post-modern movement has grown from the roots of its own history in the world of art. This is not the first time this type of aesthetic development has occurred. A strong parallel can be found in traditional Japanese art which can only be understood when the interrelationships among different art forms are taken into account. The two major sources of classical Japanese art are the *tea ceremony* and *Noh drama*. These in turn are based on Buddhism, particularly its Zen form. The tea ceremony involves a staged ritual-social event during which a host serves tea to a group of invited guests and shows them a small personal collection of art objects. The tea ceremony involves presentation, performance, and is also a demonstration of connoisseurship. It is also the art of disingenuous understatement. The tea house is a simple "hut" minimally decorated to absolute perfection. The tea service is exquisitely simple (since the sixteenth century, peasant objects or objects patterned on peasant forms are preferred) but every movement, every gesture, is choreographed. It takes years to learn to perform the tea ceremony well and perfection is

the generally unrealized goal of the master. Central to the tea ceremony (and to all Japanese classical art) is the concept of *Ma* which is the silence or the space (the bridge) between sounds or things. This "emptiness," however, is at least as important as the objects or sounds it connects. The *Ma* is a fundamental aspect of Zen Buddhism in which final enlightenment comes from the *intuitive* grasp of self as well as the "loss" of self in the cosmos. The notion of *Ma* pervades Japanese gardens, painting, music, dance, and theatre. Beyond these unifying forces, the arts of Japan, both classical and the more recent traditional forms (Kabuki and Bunraku, the theatre of the merchant class) echo with cross references. Masked faces in the Noh theatre are supposed to display emotions through the power of the performer hidden behind the mask while the unmasked face must remain mask-like. The Bunraku puppet is to be as human and life-like as possible while the Kabuki actor is to imitate the Bunraku puppet. Both theatre forms use the same plays and both draw plots from the more ancient and staid Noh. A large corpus of wood-block prints depicts Kabuki actors in famous plays and the sets for plays are often inspired by Japanese prints. A whole series of what in our own theatrical tradition would be called Brechtian mechanisms operate to maintain distance between the audience and the performance. In the Noh, lines are chanted in styles that render them difficult to understand. Props, sets, and gestures are all carefully understated. Bunraku puppets are manipulated by three puppeteers hooded and dressed in black, but fully visible to the audience, and the script is sung from one of the sidelines thus separating the text from the action. These understatements and fragmentations are all related to the concept of *Ma* and can be found in various degrees in all the arts of Japan. Even in the Kabuki and Bunraku, acting modes are highly stylized and unrealistic. The underlying structure of Japanese art (its connection to religion and the concept of *Ma* as well as its manifestation in practice) produces a set of mutually complementary aesthetic responses in the informed spectator. To fully appreciate Japanese art one must know at least something of all of it. Art in Japan talks to itself as it talks to its audience.

This fact, even if somewhat diminished, is, I suspect, a truth about art in all cultures. Art everywhere may be more about itself than it is about anything else, including, beauty. The power of art comes ultimately from it speaking about the real world, but the discourse involves a series of internal transformations and linkages that depend upon a common dynamic structure.

Sophie Hawkes

OBJECT AND ACTOR

FIVE FETISHES

My work is neither puppetry nor sculpture, but somewhere between the two. Because I work with dream and archetype, and because I feel that the materials themselves are endowed with a certain power, I call my pieces fetishes. Made out of cloth, leather, metal, glass, clay and papier-mache painted to look like procelain, wood or bone, each of these fetishes enacts a single movement. I limit them to one gesture to effect a sense of ritual in repetition, and to convey a sense of beauty as paradox, as existing in relationship to an opposite or hovering in anticipation of decomposition, annihilation or transformation.

Each fetish draws from and subverts or redefines traditional types and forms: I juxtapose disparate significations as well as widely varied materials, with the result

that each piece expresses ambiguity in terms of both reference and immediate concrete presence. Below I present verbal sketches of five of my fetishes that illustrate a proximity of opposites: beauty and death, the sensuous and the grotesque, the terrifying and the absurd.

I. The Bell Ringer

Mask face bent forward. Asian eyes looking upward, darkly. A mouth painted in part smile, part grimace; teeth bared. Around her head, crossing at the forehead, are wound strips of silk: black streaked with blue over red over a pattern of lines now parallel, now circular. Around the base of the neck winds blood-red silk over blue pierced by white flecks, again over brown circles, between the bared breasts of a Minoan earth goddess. Over her shoulders falls black silk striped with silvery violet, silk folded and sewn to suggest a kimono. Its borders are in part dark silk sparsely printed with almost colorless circles, in part the ivory cloth of an old game board scored with lines. Under her breasts is knotted black fabric overlapping an obi of waves, over a skirt of faded blue embroidered with wisteria. Hands grasp long poles, red poles. To each pole is affixed a rusted bell, each without a clapper.

Breasts too large, a face of madness. One movement: the head is thrown back menacingly or coyly, arms move from the elbow, poles rise, bells strike together with a hollow sound. Bells of restrained frenzy, a death knell, a ritual portent now become a game.

The terra cotta snake goddess from Crete and a warrior-empress in an ancient Japanese wood-block print share a mysterious nature deriving perhaps from the fact that their sexuality is harnessed by ritual — be it religious or martial. Paradoxically, however, the wielded snake and sword convey not sexual denial but rather an overwhelming omnipotence and allure. Such women are undefinable, being at the same time longed for, revered and feared. In my fetish I have borrowed the solemn eroticism of these women and tried to convey through the patterns of the fabric the underlying violence implicit in the very existence of their roles. By transforming snake and sword into hollow bells, I have retained the gesture of ritual while stripping it of both context and content. The gesture is defined yet mysterious, and it is terrifying, at least to me, in its ultimate emptiness.

II. Eurydice

At first she appears to be an icon, a relic, a veiled and frozen virgin in white now yellowing. Vaguely hopeful in the slightly forward inclination of her upper body, she awaits rebirth through faith in him who leads. To her skeletal arms, remnants of the voyage downward in which her flesh was shed, are attached the tatters of her wedding gown. Her hands, her breasts, her eyes peering through a death mask, and

her human hair belong to a beauty sought by men, a beauty re-emerging as she passively follows upward.

When her strings are pulled her arms are raised. Exposed to Orpheus' forbidden gaze, forced twice to die, she raises her skeleton arms to cover her eyes, to be not seen. As the arms protrude one sees that she has indeed decomposed, is decomposing. Her veil once more becomes the shroud engulfing her. No longer beautiful to a man's eyes she becomes that of which he is afraid — an image of the psychic death he has caused. When the arms are affixed in their upward position, Eurydice reassumes a macabre and ephemeral beauty. But in the act of raising her arms in an attempt to shield herself, there is an acknowledgment of her role as victim — I have portrayed Eurydice in a transition from object to actor then back again. It is her movement, her gesture, which make her both sensuous and grotesque, sensuous in her self-assertion, grotesque in her helplessness.

III. The Charlatan

Marbles painted black on the underside became his eyes, rosary beads his teeth. A glove found in the street provided him with a leather breastplate; of red leather are his two-pointed jester's cap and leather leggings. A monkey's face and wide-spread monkey hands create an effect part demonic, part humoristic.

My intent in this fetish was to explore ambiguity. For indeed the same gestures, the same expressions, are often produced in opposite circumstances: at some point, our perception of pain and pleasure are dependent on context. Hence in an ambiguous context, simultaneous impressions replace interpretation, recognition submits to mystery.

Motionless he stands on a frame suggesting scaffold or stage — arms hang loosely and the mouth grins. Infernal jester or grotesque warrior: breastplate, black sleeves, black boots imply the former; the red of his cap and thighs, the red silk of his ruff and bloomers connote the latter. Abruptly the hands are pulled up to the face and the head jerks back. His expression seems to change from grin to convulsion or pain or laughter. The warrior writhes, the jester mocks, or vice-versa.

IV. The She-Wolf

In Japanese Bunraku theatre there is a demon figure with a female face and a fox face sculpted back to back on a single head. With a swift movement a puppeteer swivels the head — the face "transforms" and we are to conclude that beauty masks deceit. My fetish differs from its source on three counts: first, the transformation process is gradual and thus visible or without deception; second, it is not complete; and third, there is no fixed value attributed to either face as they stand in relationship to one another.

Crossing slightly at the base, thin rods support wrists held waist high. One hand is wolf-grey; in the other, a human hand, is held a lacquered fan. From each wrist extends a string attached to the head. Two faces co-exist side by side. Both faces are seen together when the head is motionless; both are framed by ties the color of dried blood attached to a faded green hat and secured under each chin. On the left side of the head is the bowed and sphinx-like face of a woman with slanted pale blue eyes. Beside her face, in profile, is the upturned face of a wolf with an open mouth, gnarled teeth and a dark silk tongue. In this position the arms are opened outward.

Because the head is attached to a pole that runs through the body to the base, when one turns a lever near the base the head turns slowly, causing the strings to shorten and the hands to be pulled inward. The woman's face disappears and the wolf face, now laughing, is seen alone: the fan is now drawn under the chin while the wolf hand seems to beckon.

When side by side, there is a tension between the two faces, an anxiety produced by fragmentation. A sense of relief, of resolution is found when the potential for beauty in the female face gives way to the horror of the wolf in order that a unity be achieved. The beauty of fragments in tension and the consolation of unity cannot stand together: one always moves towards the other.

V. Mother Death

Once the world was not split into opposites: contradictions lay at peace beside each other. Inside an Egyptian sarcophagus, for example, is painted a goddess with rain-milk flowing from her breasts. The nurturing forces of life were depicted hovering over man even in death. Death was envisioned as though it were a dream: both evoked images of a voyage into a realm unknown. And the articulation of the voyage became a life-affirming process through verbal or plastic expressions, through myth-making.

Drawing on symbols rather than on specific myths, this fetish embodies such a process through a cycle of metamorphosis. Based loosely on the concept of a 15th century "*vierge ouvrante*," the robe splits apart as the arms are opened outward, thus revealing another aspect within.

Darkness. A figure in a black robe with a face painted like dark wood. The silhouette forms the shape of a coffin within a blue niche. Sleep or death, eyes staring; a sense of closure, of self-containment.

When a string is pulled from behind, the arms open out — the figure underneath is seen through the borders of the now opened robe which frames the almost architectural interior cavity again with the outline of a coffin. Surrounded now by the white lining of the black robe, the dark face glows. From her outstretched

arms, extending backwards, is draped sheer white fabric with many folds. Around her neck are clay, cloth and hammered metal artifacts. Her thirteen breasts hang like udders above a waistband of coarsely woven fibers encircled with metal, over a skirt of vells. Containment yields to chaos, dream-chaos of folds and of breasts seen through the open arms.

Angus Fletcher

BASIC DEFINITIONS OF *THRESHOLD* FOR A THEORY OF LABYRINTHS

My assumption is that the Labyrinth (L) will remain conceptually obscure unless we consider it in connection with two other ideas: the Temple (T) and the Threshold (THR). My own awareness of the need for this procedure developed slowly. It focussed initially in my studies of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1596), which is the largest and most ambitious English poem based on the idea of the L. Spenser sets his narrative in a mythic world called *Faerieland*. He indicates that for him and his reader this will be a mazelike terrain. Its borders are unclear, edges blurred; internal structures are pointedly named but then geomythically distorted in shape and extent; narrative lines cross and recross, with medieval and Ariostan *entrelacements*; disoriented heroes and heroines are forever getting lost and refound,

imprisoned and escaping, searching always for some clear sense of direction in a highly indeterminate world, sometimes catching this sense, often losing it, only to catch it again, or almost catch it and then truly catch it, again and again. Spenser's *Faerieland* is the archetypal L for English and North American literature.

The most striking spatial property of *Faerieland* is that it repeats its own labyrinthine macrostructure on progressively smaller and smaller scales of microstructure. Thus, it contains within its vague outer boundaries two obviously "smaller" typical subzones: (1) Specific L's (e.g., the Wood of Error in Book I, Canto 1); and (2) Specific T's (e.g., the House of Holiness, in Book I, Canto X). Furthermore, L's are nested within L's — at the heart of the Wood of Error there lies a tertiary L, which is called "Error's Den." Nested in this monstrous retreat struggles an Escherian dragon, Error *herself*, her writhing serpentine coils producing yet a fourth subzone of the L, error *itself*. Because she ingests and spews out a vomituous load of erroneous books and writings, the external coils of her dragon-body are finally inverted, subject to a law of infinite regress. The last distinguishable L-zone Spenser gives us is the mere blackness of printer's ink, which slowly beclouds the Dragon's helpless frenzy; she disappears into her own inky vortex, perhaps through the printer's mark of a period: "." A black dot.

This nesting process occurs also with T's. There are inner, and yet more inner and inner rooms in the House of Holiness. If, whenever the hero goes astray, he descends into deeper and deeper levels of error, he also exits from errant confusion by reaching, entering and enduring a T of some kind. There he undergoes the same sort of sequential, but now *pro*-gressive entrance into more inward, more holy "rooms of state." In either case we notice that the movement of the hero is towards a center.

By and large Spenser seems to be presenting a dialectical process of movements up or down between dark and light — a traditional heroic trial by error and redemption. But Spenser, like the mannerist and baroque poets after him, has sophisticated his fable in a variety of ways. His primary method is the following: he indicates that every T is a potential L, and vice versa. His *Faerieland*, for example, is tortuous in its topological indeterminacy. Yet he calls it "delightful" — "this delightful land of faerie." The word "delightful" conveys the ambivalence. *Faerieland* is good, because it is full of delights; yet it is equally dangerous, because delight itself may lull or mislead the hero into spiritual torpor. By the same token, the instruction the hero receives in a temple of virtue is so ambiguously expressed (at all levels of *lexis*) that the reader soon perceives a danger of the sacred place. The hero's holy instruction may inflate his ego, his own sense of his gifts and good fortune, until his vision of truth is darkened with what Milton called "excessive light." To combat this paradoxical form of death, Spenser uses devices traditional to L-literature. He develops formulas for the uncanny conversion of L into T, T into L, L

into L, and T into T. In this way every L may be at the same time a T, or through a complex program of loops and subroutines may become a T, and vice versa.

Again, students of the L will not be surprised by at least one aspect of the L/T conversion. If L-structures are by nature involuted and reticulated, if they aspire to the highest degree of seemingly randomized labyrinthine complexity, the T by contrast aspires to order and simplicity, whose emblem might be the topmost point of a church spire. This maximal contrast is exactly what produces the chief interest of archetypal works such as those of Borges and Calvino. In the former a perfect L is given as Zeno's "straight-line labyrinth" (*Death and the Compass*); in Calvino the equivalent conversion occurs in *Cosmicomics*, where the labyrinthine "all" is positioned "at one point." In short, the extremism of L- and T- structures, their extreme mazedness and extreme templarity, allows each easily to dissolve into its opposite.

If, however, one goes back in historical time to an earlier poet like Spenser, or yet earlier to Lucius Apuleius, or yet further back to Minoan civilization, one feels more strongly the inherent strangeness of the delightful conversion. For, to take Spenser, he does arrange things so that his L's are patently dangerous mazes, his T's patently safe sanctuaries. At first sight his narrative disengages the two structures. Only slowly does the reader perceive their "overlap." On the other hand, a trained reader of L-literature will be quicker to note the signs of the dissolution and merging of opposite structures. Authors employ half-buried signals to quicken this awareness; Borges, for example, is fond of the word "almost," just at the moment when one would expect his narrative to make a perfect absolute commitment to L or T. Henry James, who with Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Whitman and Melville, is eminent among North American masters of the labyrinth, will typically use a hesitant, recursive bit of syntactical deviance to signal that he is about to subvert the tangle of L or the clarity of T. This signalling tends to mark a shift in what James called "atmosphere" or "ambience." At such moments the trained reader is cued into a need for paying sharp attention to the motions of the text. Even so, a work like *The Golden Bowl* weaves its way through hundreds of pages before the final templar illumination is reached. This illumination occurs, furthermore, in a narrative which, as it draws to a close, becomes increasingly and intensely more and more cabballistic in its self-referentiality. The last pages of *The Golden Bowl* are, like the pages of Calvino, almost pure metalanguage.

To account for the ways in which any text, including those made of material members, such as megacities (e.g., Safdie's Habitat), may achieve either an interim or final L/T conversion, we need a third analytic term, Threshold (THR).

If all T's and L's are, by definition, initially distinct structures which at some privileged moment (a "prophetic moment") meet and begin to merge, then we need to know what is possibly common to both. Of any two distinct structures lying in

closest proximity, what is common to both will be an extended point or set of points, i.e., an edge. Suppose, for purposes of argument, that the prime human interest of L's and T's is the question: Is one entering, or leaving? It then follows that the edge we should talk about is a *temenos*, *limen*, *sill*, *soglio*, *seuil*, *schwelle*, *umbral*, *entrada*, *ingresso*, *uscita*, etc. My claim is that by skillful management of such THR-types, the Daedalian L-maker articulates real and mental space (and time), so that, at some point, the L/T conversion can take place.

Very likely the importance of THR in L-structures will, again, occasion no surprise. The myth of Theseus and Ariadne emphasizes THR-passage: he passes across the THR, she does not. Those sacrificial victims who had previously crossed over had never crossed back out again into free territory. Theseus was the first to cross and re-cross. For him this was the ultimate trial. With his magic sword and shield he could easily kill the Minotaur. Borges' Asterion, indeed, helps the hero; Asterion gives up without a fight; more than that — he embraces his killer. Borges shows us an Asterion who in effect has been longing to prove that *he* at least is not the monster. The L is monstrous, and the un-recrossable THR is the monster. The Minotaur is only the generative lure that calls the hero into the L, to begin finding himself. But the THR — that is another story.

A comprehensive taxonomy of THR would require a lengthy, careful and perhaps unreadable treatise. Theories of branching, whether in mathematics, computer science, linguistics, psychology, biological science (especially genetics), geology, physics and chemistry — all such fields with all their many extensions will be seen to employ some concept of THR. All require some concept for the definition and measurement of instantaneous or longer-term intervallic change. If to these fields we add the humanistic disciplines of anthropology, history, archeology and the arts of the five senses, and then add the cabbalistic, gnostic and mystical neoplatonic divisions of theology, we end up, ironically, just about where we began — in the Library of Babel, Calvino's galactic megacity of signs and nothing but signs. Taxonomic elegance seems virtually impossible under these conditions. Stuck in the miasmic excess of possible data we have nowhere to turn but toward the idea of turning itself. Like the Minotaur making an inventory of his Borgesian summer palace, the taxonomist appears doomed to accept the L as inscrutable and unspeakable in its totality. With regard to this total plethora, he is almost reduced to silence. And yet somehow he has to cut through the miasma, the London fog of Dickens' *Bleak House*. Hope, of course, springs eternal. As Calvino's *Smog* shows, there is an intimate connection between carcinogenic pollutant mixtures and the working of the bureaucracy. On this basis we can only hope that THR-analysis will cut through what in English we call the "red tape," a web of circumstantial "hedgings" that will threaten even our own "clear spirits" as we approach the L of L's.

What then, finally, is a THR? I have mentioned the builder's use of the term: sill, *soglio*, *umbral*, *schwelle*, etc. Structurally these are revealing terms, for they emphasize the fact that the door-sill *supports* the door-frame, and thus permits, among other things, the "hanging" of a door at a threshold. Doors, in short, are secondary forms of THR, dependant upon the THR proper. (Doors, which I have no time to describe in any detail, permit the blocking of movement at a THR; they also permit the opening up of a THR at some desired moment in a sequence of passage-searches.) The primacy of the THR proper is clear to us from studies in phenomenology and the anthropology of religious THR-rites, "rites of passage." In primitive as well as modern societies THR's are hedged about with rituals of decontamination, blessing, "undoing," etc. There exists, as we know, a quite massive literature on the topic of THR's as we know them in our material, historical world. In this Vichian, Heideggerian world there is no shortage of useful examples of almost unbearably palpable THR's, which we need only remember in order to "know" what a THR is, or might be.

On the admittedly dangerous assumption that we all know what THR's are, let us define a THR as follows:

DEFINITION (1.1)

Any opening between an inside and an outside.

From this definition flows the familiar distinction between "indoors" and "outdoors." Since T's are safe and L's dangerous, DEF (1.1) points to another familiar distinction: THR marks the separation-line between the sacred and the profane. *The Temple*, by George Herbert (1593-1632), perfectly displays this function of THR. Of 164 poems comprising the book, two precede the series comprising the main body of "the church." The first is entitled "The Church-porch: Perimrhantierium"; this is a catechism in 77 six-line stanzas. Strictly speaking this catechism has to "take place" *outside* the church, but as closely adjacent to it as possible. Its moralizing commands to the reader refer generally to the need for honest and upright behavior in the profane world of human affairs, and for the need to bring these good attitudes into the church. Then follows the critical page in the book of *The Temple*. On it are printed two separate stanzas, under the title: "Superliminare."

Thou, whom the former precepts have
 Sprinkled and taught, how to behave
 Thy self in church; approach, and taste
 The churches mysticall repast.

Avoid, Profaneness; come not here;

Nothing but holy, pure, and cleare,
Or that which groneth to be so,
May at his perill further go.

The typesetter has marked the THR with the double line of division and has further emphasized the "invisible" nature of THR (in the 1633 edition) by removing the usual page-heading and page-number. The THR hovers in a typographic state of suspension. Taken simply (without, for example, analyzing the doubleness of the THR-line), this THR—this "superluminare"—divides the sacred *within* from the profane *without*. In a sense it protects the T from any violence. It guards what is most necessary to many, the safety of the sanctuary.

By this very fact, however, the traditional Herbertian THR might seem to deny the reality, certainly the goodness, of all that will be excluded, all those profane activities which man lives with in his daily life. Our first definition is therefore too exclusive, though reasonable as a first step. We have to proceed.

DEFINITION (1.2)

Any opening between an outside and an inside.

This definition appears to be the same as DEF (1.1). It differs, however, in that it presents the same terms in a changed form, by sequential inversion, or, more precisely, reversal. (1.1) assumed, rather too readily, that the inside is always a T, the outside always an L. For that reason Inside came *first*, Outside *second*. (1.2) reverses this order. The mere fact that we can reverse the order raises the question: can we avoid giving a privileged status to either T or L? It might seem that they are equally privileged. But if we can syntactically place one *before* the other, if we cannot avoid doing so, despite convertibility at par value, then each actual L-text will in fact privilege one over the other. Only empirical research will decide what is the tendency in any given case, whether T or L is more heavily weighted in *Journey to the End of the Night* or *The Marble Faun*, James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* or Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (or certain ones among the latter, as distinct from others). Using Northrop Frye's mythographic terminology, we could organize our empirical research along the following lines: a) weighted L suggests the author's bias toward tragedy and irony; b) weighted T suggests bias toward comedy and romance. By accepting his own preferred weighting or privileging attitude, the maker allows himself a preferred kinetic shape or genre. Thus a work with weighted L will carry the reader down through a spiral, while weighted T carries him up through a spiral. The overall aesthetic impression of the work will be either "rising" or "falling."

Yet even here there seems to be an inadequacy. Both irony and comedy have the effect of suspending judgment about what "up" and "down" really mean. We are ready for a third definition.

DEFINITION (1.3)

Any opening between an inside/outside and an outside/inside.

This definition describes a THR when complete L-conversion/T-conversion has occurred. Suppose that a perfect L is laid over a perfect T, and the two are found to be in all respects identical. Lewis Carroll has one such overlay in *Sylvia and Bruno*, where the "Man in the Moon" (Mein Herr) describes a map which is the same size as the country of which it is a map (cf. Borges: "Of Exactitude in Science," in *Etcetera*).

Manifestly there are technical difficulties about (1.3), at least on levels of magnitude which we humans encounter in our terrestrial lives. Lewis Carroll can only pretend that the map and the country are identical, though by verbal magic we are enabled to believe them so. In principle, however, map and country can be perfectly convertible, which allows *Sylvia and Bruno* to make fun of the brute realities of the situation, with certain results that follow. The results are visionary:

"Have you used it much?" (the narrator inquires of Mein Herr, about the map)

"It has never been spread out, yet," said Mein Herr: "the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So now we use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well..."

—Sec. IV, ch. 11

More serious than these material difficulties is an apparent theoretical impossibility: if T and L form a perfect overlay, then there is no edge between them, as there would be none between two identical circles superimposed one on top of the other, or one placed under the other. For a THR to exist in this context, it must lie at some different "level" of inside/outside. And it does so. It lies at the level of theoretical emergence where a 2-dimensional plane surface translates into a 3-dimensional volume. Here THR marks some access or opening into the third dimension. Because we live in a 3-dimensional world, (1.3) is effectively the most telling of L-types in literature and the arts, and perhaps in physics as well. Once again the ancient myth of the Cretan L prefigures much that has followed. There were two methods of escape, the one provided Theseus by Ariadne, the other achieved by the L-designer, Daedalus. Much can be said about the implications of the two methods, but it suffices here to observe that Ariadne's thread meets two requirements for re-crossing the THR: a) it unrolls along an *essentially* 2-dimensional plane, a plane surface merely distorted by momentary ups and downs; b) it unrolls and is again rolled up in a single, unbroken continuous line. Hawthorne's retelling of the tale ("The Minotaur," in *Tanglewood Tales*) states that at no time during the hero's battle with the Minotaur does Theseus ever let go of the "silken cord." He knows it is continuous because he can always "feel a tremulous twitch at the silken cord;" in

short, he remains in touch with Ariadne's hand, as if, by this device, action at a distance had become possible and real. Her delicate fingertips have been magically extruded, to become continuous with Theseus's left hand.

Daedalus, on the other hand, has other problems and other resources. Owing to King Minos' wrath, he cannot afford to escape by means of a magical continuity-machine. He is too proud, perhaps, and his son too lazy, for them to escape by tunnelling their way out. Certainly such methods would have seemed to him boring, already out of date. His imagination stirs and he takes the road of discontinuity. He flies out. His son, a grandiose adolescent, cannot tell the difference between light and heat; he never did understand things like wax; he flies too high, and falls back into the cold chambers of the sea, from whence Bull, Minotaur and doubtless all Minoan culture had once sprung. With the fall of Icarus the original Daedalian myth of the L comes to an end; with Theseus' desertion of the princess on the island of Naxos, the Ariadnean continuity-myth plays itself out and similarly comes to its original end. It is no accident that Icarus' failure to understand discontinuity, and Ariadne's to understand continuity have given poets, painters and musicians some of their most humanly affecting artistic subjects.

The nature of this affect, this feeling, is important. It is, in a word, historical. Daedalus seems to stand outside his own creations, like a man whose most intricate L-visions are actually T-visions. He can always get out of the gravitationally bound "plane" surface mazes of this world. But his son cannot, nor can Ariadne. They seem to be victims of a more human lot. They both suffer from impatience and a weak sense of the need to let time pass. Unlike Daedalus they would not see that, given an L constructed by human means, and given enough time, escape is almost inevitable. Unlike Daedalus they would not know when to hurry up, and when to slow down. Their hopes and usage of escape artistry are hopelessly mechanical; they do not understand the principles of entrance and exit. They do not grasp the meaning of the shadow of the lintel, the *umbral*, as Hawthorne makes clear to his reader. They are thus doomed to live out the fall into profane time, with its abandonments and falls, and its apotheoses through the agency of the *deus ex machina*. They are the victims of history, and its wasteland. They do not ever see that life is neither pure L nor pure T, but a periodic conversion of each into the other, such that escape from one or the other always means a discontinuous leap between the two. They do not see, finally, what is already suggested by DEF (1.3), but which needs to be made explicit in yet another definition, namely that nothing absolutely desirable (T-like) or undesirable (L-like) ever occurs all at one point.

DEFINITION (1.4)

Any opening between any L/T structures of the three types described in Definitions (1.1, 1.2, and 1.3).

These three prior definitions listed the T/L relationship in different orders, as regards sequence (a before b, b before a, a and b simultaneously). The method of listing indicates that sequence itself is being given a special weight and privilege. This doubtless betrays an Occidental bias, but that is no problem—there will be time enough, as Borges and his antecedents have instructed us in the beauty of Oriental views.

Given the Western obsession with “latering,” we have no recourse but to proceed to an obvious fourth step. DEF (1.4) seems to abolish all distinction between the first three definitions. In fact, this abolition is merely an appearance, a formal mirage. Some distinctiveness does remain to color (1.4): the distinctiveness implicit in the fact that DEFS (1.1-1.3) are and have been given as sequentially representable. DEF (1.4) defines THR as the emergence of a set belonging to a higher order than any of the three prior definitions, including (1.3): we may call this the THR of *sequential representability*, or, in simpler terms, the THR of usable memories. It will be easier to grasp this notion if we rewrite the definition in the following familiar form:

DEFINITION (1.41)

Any opening between events distinctly occurring in time.

Our only problem, one dear to L-makers, will be to decide then, about distinctness, occurrence, and time. That’s all! At about this moment in any L-construction, particularly an L-theory of L’s, there arises a peculiar need. We have to retain our sense of humor. We have to join the company of all great L-makers, adopting their “as if” attitude, their sense that the job is some kind of cosmic joke. The L-type Mobius-strip fortunately becomes a cosmicomic-strip, according to DEFS (1.4 and 1.41). The joke’s on us, as the saying goes. This humoristic response is a basic technique for survival in all known L-situations. Even the grimmest visions of the L somehow keep their humorous sense of things, whether it be Kafka’s, or that of Tertz in *The Makepeace Experiment*, that of Daedalus, or Le Corbusier. I believe that Herodotus’ accounts of the Egyptian L at Hathor shows him able to perceive some kind of absurdist comedy going on in that gradiose construction. Authors of literary L’s as entangled and immense and oppressive as those of Balzac and Henry James never fail to display the sense that there is something deeply comical about the way events in time “open up” into new and unexpected regions of possibility. The ever-present joke seems to result from an awareness that possible/impossible is the ultimate catachresis, the last oxymoron. There is a need for one final definition of THR, to encompass this phase of labyrinthine sensibility.

DEFINITION (1.5)

Any opening between any two (or more?) space-time events occurring, where it remains undecidable what any of these terms in the definition may actually mean.

Without getting into the niceties of theories of meaning, one can say that DEF (1.5) results from a basic flaw in the desire for fixed definitions. All such fixings are subject to decay, shift, or transformation in time. The extreme statement of this principle is the statement that all points of reference are relationally uncertain, and all etymologies are subject to a continuous historical erosion and transformation, to the point that ultimately all etymologies are false.

There is, of course, a less extreme view of the matter, and it is the view taken by our poets and visionaries, in whatever field they work. For such workers and makers and visionaries all terms involving L, T, or THR will have to be placed "In quotes." Thus DEF (1.5) would read: "Any" "opening" "between" "any" "two" "(" "or" "more" "?" ")" "space" "-" "time" "events" "occurring" "," "where" "it" "remains" "undecidable"—and so on to the end. Furthermore, all single terms have to be bracketed with their natural cohorts, to produce phrases, which in turn have to be placed in quotes. The process is not quite endless. It may only be a "thought experiment," but it will serve a useful purpose. It will draw our attention to a phenomenon which I think is revealing, namely that THR's may ultimately be the experience of undecidability combined with the acceptance that whatever is to be "seen" at the THR has already been seen, or said. The THR is a quotable thing. As the literature and architecture of L's will quickly show, this has always been an art of uncanny quotation. Just think for a moment of *Tristram Shandy*—it is an immense, discontinuous narrative made entirely of quotations. Everything in it, including its punctuation and typography, is presented as quotation. *Tristram Shandy* grows out of *Don Quixote*, whose hero's madness might well be described as a *manie de citation*. It was the Don himself who, for us moderns, set forth the basic principles of L-theory, when he observed (as I remember the words), "Sancho, there are two kinds of adventures—adventures of crossroads and adventures of inns." At such moments he escaped his schizophrenia, he broke the double-bind, he broke out of the box of the Cretan Liar, and (as Bateson would say) he saw that most common judgments of insanity and sanity are coiled up in errors of the failure to see when the main human effort is *due* to the faithful observance of the various possible and relevant meanings of the term THR. Quixotic statements like the one I have just cited mark the movement of Quixotic *decision*, and invariably they occur whenever the Don rises above his mere mortality. These moments in turn tend to occur when things look darkest for the hero, or his friend Sancho. When things are most

confused for the hero of the maze, he somehow, perhaps miraculously, thinks quite differently. He accepts undecidability, and makes a decision. In terms of THR-theory, he accepts at moments of purest bliss or purest despair the need for a notion of openness itself. Where this openness will lead is not clear. But that it is clear is clear. The THR is finally only a clearness—a receptivity to the idea that definitions, in process, cannot end, but that they may begin. Oddly, having said that memories are redeemed, perhaps like a coupon, if not like a human soul, it is strange to have to observe finally that the “quoted” memories of the maze are not felt to be memories at all. They are set free of the usual imprisoning categories of memory (history-books, *comptes rendus*, computer banks, and the like). They seem to float free. They recombine freely, as if they were not memories, but something else.

Wallace Stevens once wrote a poem entitled “A Clear Day and No Memories.” He catches the final purport of THR which I have, impressionistically, been trying to convey. In this poem Stevens is the manifest heir to Whitman, the manifest precursor of John Ashbery, and of the other North American poets who specialize in visions of THR. Our poets and prose authors seem to be almost too preoccupied with THR-experiences. The vast extent of a novel like *Gravity’s Rainbow*, for example, is deceiving. It consists of almost nothing but THR’s, line after line, page after page. The quest is almost too Daedalian. But Stevens says it all.

A Clear Day and No Memories

No soldiers in the scenery,
No thoughts of people now dead,
As they were fifty years ago,
Young and living in a live air,
Young and walking in the sunshine,
Bending in blue dresses to touch something,
Today the mind is not part of the weather.

Today the air is clear of everything.
It has no knowledge except of nothingness.
And it flows over us without meanings,
As if none of us has ever been here before
And are not now: in this shallow spectacle,
This invisible activity, this sense.

Final note: Beyond the five definitions given, it is not apparent that THR-theory requires any further basic definitions. All more technical subsenses of the term flow from one of the five definitions, except in mathematical speculation, where topological systems of *n*-dimensional order are made further possible by means of the “argument by analogy.”

Jun Maeda

MAKING THINGS THAT ARE NOT THINGS

I, who make things that are not things, never had an opportunity to need to express myself with language. It is a difficult task for me to try to use language as a tool, and at the same time as a material. I have been living here for 9 years, and I have been making sets for 15 years, and I am having a much more creative time here than I had back in Japan. Work is work, making things is a duty, what to make—these are the first thoughts that come to mind when I start to make a set. For me, drawing a plan is in the process of making, I do not need a piece of paper to work on. What I cannot make, I cannot draw. For me, drawing a plan is in the environment and human relationship I am placed. But these environments and relationships are not just placed in front of your eyes as things, but as something

you create. I take a long, solitary time to look into myself before I begin. One must be a human being before trying to make things. But that is not enough. Am I capable of making things? I ask that question of myself whenever I start to work. I think it is important to have that attitude before touching material. Since my vocabulary is limited, I have to talk to the materials with Japanese tools, which are absolutely different in making and concept, from Western tools. The space on the stage is limitless, so I try to find out how I would fit myself into this space, and I keep thinking about this while I am working and this attitude is the most important thing. Visual value—this is the last thing that concerns me. I do not intend to make something new, or special. I think of the minimum function first, and then the interactive human relationship to which the things I make might add something more, so that together everything becomes deeper.

I enjoy the pride and responsibility of responding to people's expectations. Life is once. I want to devote myself to the theater, and if even my spare time is useful, then I am creative. Making things that are not things, that's my world.

TRANSLATION BY OCHIISHI

Raffaele Perrotta

THE SIGN—SYMBOL CIRCUM-SCRIBING-ITSELF

With the *Birth of philosophy*, many other things were engendered. The Greek language is disciplined, metalinguistically, and there ensued a proliferation of disciplinary bodies. The sophist noonday of the Parmenidean $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau'\omicron\nu\omicron\mu(\alpha)$ undergoes the Platonic attack first, then the Aristotelian bridling. Lastly, and definitively, the subjugation of language,¹ and the process of its languages;² and the decreeing of World and the Foundation of World, right at the nodal locus of the genesis of philosophy; permit the attainment of the theoretical field of 'interpretation'. 'Sense', and the apparent 'countersense'; the logical aporetic; the un-de-finable *abyssal* "wisdom" of the Logos of the Western Man; all are being relegated to the margins of Knowledge, taking the back seat: temporal accident of a wholly incipient cognitive

development. Before *declared* 'philosophy', the early philosophers, who do not this name bear, are the audacious wayfarers on the un-nameable, and/or many-named, main road.

The early philosophers, who do not this name bear. . . the aureate Pythagoras, perhaps; or the obscure Eraklitos? The Mediterranean shores are embellished by words destined to make proud, as categoric thought blossomed and grew out of proportion, the cosmic and fatal consciousness of the Hegelian 'Lord'. The originary structure is neither structuralism nor geneticism. The birth of philosophy secularizes the Search for sacrality, which was proper of the sacrifice of the morning priesthood. The 'sign' becomes referent, while the eye, dazzled by the glare of wisdom, and the mouth, which used to utter meaning-less sentences,³ — and rhetorics, also, as the only salvation from onto-logic unsurmountability — , became the logic suitable to the new, self-possessed, theoretical man: the interpreter: a proud and clever 'critic' on the scene of reading. Thus the epistemic axis derives its origin from the World-Foundation couple, precluding access to the Cosmic-Abyss couple — the 'treatise', with its scientification, casts myth and its innate form as 'symbol', into the ir-rational, in the shadows.

And yet, the birth of philosophy and its history and its tradition and its schools and diatribes notwithstanding, the primigenial One, lightening and thundering, leaves one aghast: "Wiederum kann uns die Sprache einen Wink geben. Im Zeitwort 'leeren' spricht das 'Lesen' im ursprünglichen Sinne des Versammelns, das im Ort waltet."⁴

Leeren, Lesen. . . having-declared-itself, 'philosophy,' referring to Logos, engages a struggle with no holds barred and to the last drop of blood (of the 'spirit' itself), in order to attain the Law of Logos, and thence a dialectic — and totalizing — 'comprehension' of the essential gathering of the Cosmos and its 'forms'. From the epi-stemic problem of the Logos (the so-called presocratic knowledge) to the epi-stemics of the Logos. Philosophy proper — the ancient, Greek kind, from Plato to Aristotle — has marked⁵ the 'sense' of Western Knowledge (of Culture — 'culture', cultivation of spirits). Today, the issue of thought should be undertaken in the name of Logos, with a theoretical rather than a historical effort, beyond Dialectics, assuming the demeanour of Hermeneutics, and establishing the 'terms' of the gnoseologic and ontologic discourse (of the text). Hermeneutics is the presupposition of: the 'limit' of knowledge in 'terms' of the discourse (of the text) of Knowledge. With a footnote, in Capitals: for the self-in-scribing sign 'knowledge' is the self-transgressing limit — symbolically.

The birth of philosophy created proselytes, and has had a continuity continu-

ing to today. Like the Greek language, so all languages that followed in the wake have suffered the incident lancet of *taxonomic* Metalanguage: the *referential contrivance*. The World, with its 'foundations,' set up a barrier in front of the Foundation and its ontico-empirical regions of scientific reason. *The episteme, far from being the revelation of the dramatic plunging-into-the-abyss of the world, and therefore far from being epi-steme or rather pro-blem, be-comes a formalizing procedure.* Will of World (the aulic of *Weltanschauung* and *world-view*) theorizing Earth — rendering-clear⁶ of History. And yet, the dexterity of *techne* burles itself again, much like its means of realization. The Earth — the *History of the Earth* — is iterative: 'formation' and 'reformation' — the pointedness of 'revolution'. The Earth continues on its path despite the World's stillness. But the 'world' — *doxa* and 'opinion' — is the obstinately faithful friend to *virile* man; and *the World is a Mode*. Highest sally of wisdom: *war*. From the *theorizing* 'world' to the *warring* 'world'. To be at peace with oneself and the world: to be at war with oneself and the world. *Peace in war.*

History has its sign — of *earth*. Σήματα boil in Υεάμματα. The 'sign' is *in-scription*. When, in comprehending and interpreting the historic sign (of the earth), a change into an *ars pro-ducente* is not desired, hermeneutics will re-echo the sign, semantically, and therefore grammatically. *The hermeneutic sign is the sign of sense, not the sense of the sign.* 'Hermeneutics' is *tran-scription*. *The science of the spirit is the science of history.*

Under the banner of the sign — *hermeneutics is drama*. Semantico-grammatical hermeneutics, whirlpooled⁷ by the recalling sign, probes deeply, by founding and sinking itself into the pro-found bottom of the back-ground⁸ of the historic sign of earth, whose s-hade obnubilates, blueyed, name of. *Hermeneutics is not formalism, and it is wild signifying of essentialism on the harsh and torn aftermath: the vagueness of Critical Reading.* Man who can know is *bìos-biòs*, in the a-nameable, alongside *techne-hybris*.

'Interpretation' is an act-of-violence. Is 'knowledge' an act-of-violence? *Is 'Wisdom' a dramatic hermeneutically symbolic — of the sign?* The uttered word of knowledgeable man is self-destined to become a *problem of science*. The stamp of hermeneutics takes the tragic greatness upon itself: majesty is an art name, the royal 'we'. The early-morn tingle of the West is the fabulous and tragic fable of Myth. The *limit* of 'knowledge' is the nebula of 'dialectics' con-founded with the symbolic circum-inscription of the sign. Excited affabulation — hermeneutics insisting. Homo-humus (sur-rounding oc-cur-ring)⁹ is a symbolic perimeter. Thus, that's what the arts (of the sciences) announce. Man is a symbolic animal —emerging from humus:

a complex elaboration of sign. *Hermeneutics is correspondence with Sign*, very strongly elaborated into Symbol: the former burning with the latter, a double flame of one fire, an amplified voice. *Hermeneutics of Sign — Hermetics of Symbol*. 'Hermeneutics' — recasting of sign, and its reverberation, its rotating, its becoming red-hot. *Drama of Hermeneutics, of w o r d , in the semantic gorge of σήματα*, etymological of γεάμματα: a *Boden* plunging-itself-into-the-abyss — chasm, jargon of gorgling gorge.

The 'tragic' Nietzsche names one name: Oedipus, people-character, vital and gnostic tryad, luminous Apollinean tracing in a Dionisian jolting.

Constellation of the document. Splendor-scales, thickness-turgidity, glaring and lightening of Λόγοζ duplicity of Λόγοζ, of the ever-self-expanding Λοργοζ.

Faust and Mephistopheles — people-character from *Fiction* stirring fire — I am that same Goethe taken to the *nth* polyvalent power — a star with two faces, a real name masked with fantastical names. Goethe's text is a series of themes never transcended into system, the diary of a working day.

We wage war against the most cruel wars, we, worldlyzed,¹⁰ against the World-Mode — we, of the world.¹¹ Curiositas and World Literature, the w o r d with-cunning-seen¹² by matchless heroes, Socrates and Nietzsche. *The zero degree of writing — epi-steme, in other words, pro-blem, science problem. Those who descend into Hades must be heroes, must possess the brawn; Saying must insinuate itself into idiomatic expressions,¹³ it must excavate and expropriate the roots of signs. The descent into Hades is abyssal.*

Λόγοζ — der Ort. "Die Frage regt sich."¹⁴ Patience and affliction of a scribe. *Pathos*.

Λόγοζ — un-tran-slateable and un-sayable w o r d. Λόγοζ is πόλεμοζ — an alternating, a double serpent, both eagle and serpent, male and female, seed that dis-seminates-itself: Sense and its double — Double-Sense. Mundane mortals with two heads scind the w o r d.

The great mirror — baroque mirror, theoretics of mirror: Dialectics climbing the ontological mirrors. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." But, "beauty is difficult." The ontological de-termination extends itself into *discursivity*. The Λόγοζ stretches its own shadow over the enlightenment of reason — in-terminable terms, un-nameable names, in-finite finiteness: *dis-course*. "All you need is the formula $X = \infty$ and

everything is clear.”¹⁵ Critique of Crisis — con-science of science, *problematically*. Heideggerian *Der Ort* — semantico-grammatical space-of-place, undoubted *letteral* ‘semantics’. But the letter *breaks-through* (-the-bottom).¹⁶ The ‘letter’ of the *signifier*¹⁷ is *pro-found*. The symbol is *density of sign*. Topo-logy caves in, and the Aristotelean *theoria* takes notice of it: δοκεῖ ζε μέγα τι εἶναι καὶ χαλεπὸν ληθθεῖναι ο τόπος.

The spirit and genius of ‘music’. The root of Music is *muse*. Memory is treasure of *muse*. Sign is memory. From silence — a cavern — the Muse. *The prophet hails forth from silence, tragically*: saying un-says: *di-scoursed*¹⁸ of ‘dis-course’. Leaves of leaves¹⁹ — hissing of the sybil,²⁰ flight of the veil;²¹ time of the fragment, trace of sense (Sense). Music: an un-ex-plainable²² w o r d. The book: astonishment of Βιβλία. *Patience and affliction of a scribe — pathos: in-scribing is a metonymic bent in reading*. Scribe means also Librarian. Ibis. Knowing and not forgetting, abyssal knowing and not abyssal forgetting. Tran-scribed in-scriptions. Spoken speech and written speech²³ are the *conditions* of speaker and writer. *Spoken speech and written speech*: self-destined to speaking and in-scribing themselves.

“No diré las fatigas de mi labor. Mas de una vez grité a la boveda que era imposible descifrar aquel texto. (...) Un dios, reflexioné, solo debe decir una palabra y en esa palabra la plenitud.”²⁴

History of the Earth — *territories*. The dimension of the spirit — provinces of the spirit. The Flower of Florence, the prize of the well, the gems of the rocks, the national Dante through Bonapartist glacis, Magna Graciae restored to life by the European pilgrim Giordano Bruno, Hölderlin: the unarmed warrior. Germany: motto of Greek movement, *oder der Eremit in Griechenland*,²⁵ and, *questi è latino*,²⁶ expatriated and roaming the deserts (in the twilight, a whitening Western heavenly body, disinherited civilization unworthy, despite its legendary claws, of the *Land-of-the-Evening*, of the *twilight of heroes*), asking that the hero be executioner for the Fall, for the flashing, for the passing-by of the Millennium; and he asks for solidarity and determination, *pre-figuration of the Laws of Forms*, luxuriant Stelio Èffrena²⁷ tran-scribing, “Chino su una medaglia del Pisanello.”²⁸

Italy My Country: the province of the spirit, the province of provinces of the spirit — degraded promontory of a degraded Europe — upsetting of the gradation of ΑΨόγος (*the science of the spirit is the science of history*). “Formosissima donna! L’armi, qua l’armi!”²⁹ countless city-states, earliest citizens accustomed to arms to

arts to science — from the Universal Italian of Fredrick II to the Tuscan Leopold;³⁰ and then, the rubbish of petty-bountiful-progressive Italy.³¹ But from beyond the ocean came Pound to teach forgetful Italians, of a Malatesta a Sigismund: the 'Italian' Pound. And after Mussolini's Fascism, Prezolini's *Italy Is Finished: This Is What's Left*:³² civil death, December, 1981, a blank, rather void, ballot.³³

"Modern music must be understood as basically bare and rigorously scholastic. No music which still manifests a hint of romantic straying, or rhythmic slackening, or impressionistic color, will find access to the province of modern music. The 'sense' of modern music is cut and dry." *The condition of music*, properly speaking, as in Savinio. *The Condition of Music*, broadly speaking, as in hermetic 'hermeneutics' — *symbolic* 'signs'. Turning point of a hermeneutic score of years. 'Limit' of *knowledge*. Last twenty years of the *Saeculum*, 'my' maturity: the 'myth' of the *Sprache* and of the *symbolic animal*. *Recit hunique*. *Opus et silentium*: blessed librarian scribe. Not the (effimerous) 'seasons' of the Cultural Industry, but the 'epochal' co-in-volvement. *The sign* — *symbol circum-scribing-itself*.

TRANSLATION BY PETER CARRAVETTA

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. *linqua*, natural language; cf. French *langue*.
2. *Linguaggio*, specific languages or codes; cf. French *langage*.
3. *significanti in-significanti*, lit. un-signifying signifiers, but the first term, *significanti*, can mean both signifying and meaningful, while the second term, in its unhyphenated form, *insignificanti*, means meaningless, or of little value.
4. Martin Heidegger: *Die Kunst und der Raum*, 1969.

5. *segnato*, lit. "signed."
6. *e-videnziare*, in its etymological sense, *ex-videre*: to make very clear.
7. *risucchiata dal richiamo del segno*, lit. sucked up again by the calling again of the sign.
8. *s-fondo*; *sfondo* is background, but in its verbal form it means to break through, i.e.: I break through. *Fondo* by itself means bottom, but it is also the first person sing. of *fondare*, to found or establish.
9. (*circo-stante ac-cad-ente*); the last unit of *accadente* (pres. part. of *accadere*, to take place or happen), *ente*, means entity, as *ens* in Lat.
10. *mondizzati*, rendered worldly.
11. *mondiali*, attributive adj. as in the model: champion of the world.
12. *tra-guardato*; *traguardo*, as a noun, is both finish line and backsight of a fire arm. *traguardare* means to line up the sights on a fire arm or any instrument, therefore to look at a faraway object, to look askance, implying a detached but suspicious as well as an analytical squaring of the object. The semantic complexity relies also on the single parts of the words, where *tra* means between or among.
13. *modi-di-dire*, an important locution in Perrotta, properly "that's-the-way-we-say-it," therefore manner of speech.
14. Heidegger, *op. cit.*
15. Ardengo Soffici, early XX Century.
16. *s-profondare*; *sprofondare* means to go through or break through the bottom (of anything, even metaphorically). But *profondare* by itself means to go to the bottom, to fathom or to get deeply into something.
17. *significante*, which can also mean meaningful, or something to reckon with.
18. *di-scorso*; *scorso* by itself means bygone, ago.
19. *foglie di fogli*; *foglie* is leaves, as on a tree; *fogli* is sheets of paper, leaves of a notebook.
20. *sibilo di sibilla*; the play here is not etymological, but rather semantic-alliterative.
21. *volo di velo*; here also the suggestion is semantic-alliterative, as the two words are not directly related in Latin.
22. *in-s-piegabile*; note that the last unit, *piegabile*, means flexible, that can be bent.
23. *scrittura*, as in *écriture*, Writing, even Scripture. *Parlata* is properly "talked" or "spoken," "that which has been spoken"; and also one's way of talking, one's speech.
24. From Borges: *La escritura del dios*.
25. Subtitle of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, 1797.
26. Dante, *Inf.*, XXVII, 33.
27. Main character of D'Annunzio's *Il Fuoco*, 1900 (Eng. tr.: *The Flame of Life*).
28. "bent over a medal of Pisanello."
29. From Leopardi's *All'Italia*, 1818: "Thou very beautiful woman! My arms, to me my arms:" First phrase of this paragraph is from same poem.
30. Roughly, from the XIII to the early XIX Century.
31. *l'Italietta*.
32. The book was originally written in English, and appeared after W.W. II.
33. *scheda bianca, anzi, nulla*; *nulla* of course also stands for nothingness, which is certainly part of the meaning the author wishes it to carry; *scheda* can be chart or schede, also.

Michèle Cone

SCENOGRAPHY

THE DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF MISE-EN-SCÈNE

It is said that confusion rules the current art scene in New York today. I believe that there is a new major orientation and I call it scenography. It is based on the deconstruction of narrative images found in theatre and in film into minimal expressive elements of *mise-en-scène*. It aims at opening new patterns of thinking and feeling by investigating, isolating and regrouping scenic elements such as gesture, lighting, props, sets, and costumes.

Some critics say that the manifestation of "scenography" in sculpture, painting,

Editor's Note — This text is an expanded and revised version of a talk given on January 29, 1980 in the context of the first Intermedia Art Festival held in New York. The title of the talk was "Sound and Scenography in the Art of the Seventies."

performance and film is too close to surrealism to be anything new. Others resent what they see as the formally backward stage-like space of some of this art; still others contend that its images are debased Pop art or decorative conceptualism. Finally, some critics put all contemporary creation under the derogatory label of Post-Modernism. It is true that in the past few years images based on the revisiting of prior styles have been accorded the visibility and critical notice they were denied in the fifties and sixties. The surge of "realist-," "constructivist-," "expressionist-" looking art can give the impression that experimentation may have succumbed to entropy. But it is also true that a number of artists who reached the zenith of Modernism with what Rosalind Krauss called "Index Art" — "paintings (that) are understood...as shifters, empty signs (like the word *this*) that are filled with meaning only when physically juxtaposed with an external referent or object"¹ — have given up this reductivist notion or seriously questioned it. Although the notion of "shifter" in relation to documentary art — art in which a caption explains the meaning of an image — was indeed useful, it nevertheless could not account for the use — increasingly common in the late 70s — of an image to which a caption was juxtaposed but meaning still remained suspended (Bill Beckley, Jean Legac). While "pointers" might rightly describe Lucio Pozzi's and Dale Henry's discreet interventions on the walls of P.S. 1, calling attention to physical context, this term did not do justice to the later productions of Pozzi and Henry when their works rather than pointing to an external referent or object instead alluded to a bank of memories and vague association engendered by the mind. And last, such an analysis ignored the type of image that has become dominant today, neither empty nor full of meaning, rich in connotations and poor in information, situated between the tyranny of single narrative meaning and the anarchic meanings of totally abstract ideolects, an image that offers, in the words of Alain Robbe-Grillet, neither the "truth" of consensual representation, nor the "freedom" of no representation at all.²

I would like to suggest that these developments are evidence that experimentation is still going on today and to propose that this orientation may have something to do with investigating limits "beyond which there may still be perceptive and emotional effects...but no more significations"; thresholds beyond which "the work of art seems to stimulate reactions but not to communicate contents."³ To the extent that this art still conveys a minimal amount of significations and communicates a minimum of content it partakes of the "avant-garde" ambition to

¹ "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America," October 4 (Fall, 1977), 64.

² "Vérité" and "liberté" were the words used by Alain Robbe-Grillet in a lecture delivered at New York University, Fall 1980.

³ Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1976), p. 267.

stimulate thought and feeling beyond its habitual cliché way of function. Like Minimalism, this new orientation would then be a search for boundaries of art, albeit an investigation of limits of expressivity rather than of visual or conceptual purity. But scenographic art is based on different presuppositions than those that ruled over the Modernist epoch.

The first presupposition in jeopardy today is the polemical force of Modernist styles. In his talk on Post-Modernism at the 1979 MLA in New York City,⁴ David Antin disposed of this phenomenon in terms that I find altogether convincing. To paraphrase what he said: it is not art that has changed but the context in which it is made. During the era of "Modernism" the avant-garde was felt as a necessity against systems said to be rational, such as the Academy, the State, syntactic everyday language, etc. When it was realized that these so-called rational systems were themselves full of irrationality, the pressure to be more irrational than they, to oppose oneself to them was less urgently felt. And he concluded "Post-Modernism is like Modernism minus the necessity to be modern!" For the presupposition "it is necessary to be absolutely modern" the artists at the leading edge today have substituted a new and urgent necessity — to examine and to deconstruct the illusionistic edifice of images through which ideologies operate and ideas — many of them merely conventions and clichés — are persuasively communicated as if they were absolute truths.

Also in jeopardy today is the idea that modernist purifications would make possible the isolation of the essence/essential aspects of art, the concept for some, the form in and for itself for others. Scenographic artists have come to admit — and I will borrow here the words of Jacques Derrida in *La Vérité en Peinture*: "I do not know what is essential and what is accessory in a work of art, and I especially do not know what is this thing neither essential nor accessory, neither proper nor improper that Kant calls 'parergon'."⁵ That there is no objectively identifiable nor structurally decipherable "parergon," frame, ornament, decor, costume, story or detail of any kind that can be labelled as accessory vis à vis an alleged core in the work — that parergon, like context, can infiltrate the work of art or be infiltrated by it — is the new presupposition.

As suggested by the image of a floor fragment reflected by a mirror situated in an empty room (I am indebted to a painting by Sylvia Mangold for this example), minimal data — undramatic as it may be but bearing a charge of expressivity — is forever coming to us, begging to be read. What is now deemed essential is to know

⁴M. Cone, "The Question of Post-Modernism," Women Artists Newsletter, February 1979.

⁵"Je ne sais pas ce qui est essentiel et accessoire dans une oeuvre. Et surtout je ne sais pas ce qu'est cette chose, ni essentielle ni accessoire, ni propre ni impropre que Kant appelle parergon. . ." Jacques Derrida, *La Vérité en Peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), p. 73.

that information, as minute and unimportant as it might first appear, may well be carrying weight in determining the way the overall image is read. Scenographic artists are thus examining the ways meanings and stories are produced by observing these "signifiers" at work in images found on T.V., in the movies and in photographs, in encyclopedias and other illustrated books, in cartoons, in stage design and in film special effects, and even in old fashioned paintings.

Another presupposition in jeopardy today has to do with the way an image conveys a meaning, and how signifiers work to produce meaningful representations. According to one line of thought, images once they are pointed to and named are automatically endowed with uncontested meaning. For example tree as drawing combined with tree as word equals the representation of the tree idea. According to Jacques Lacan, the drawing of a tree on an empty page and the word tree that happens to be seen next to it separately convey fragments of information and incomplete meanings. "No meaning," he writes,⁶ "is sustained by anything other than reference to another meaning." For him, their metonymic association on the page provokes a desire for meaning — "the signifier by its very nature always anticipates meaning by unfolding its dimension before it..."⁷ — but it also provokes a conflicting array of meanings since "there is, in effect, no signifying chain which does not have attached to the punctuation of each of its units a whole articulation of relevant context suspended 'vertically' from that point."⁸ In other words, each signifier sparks a string of subjective associations or metaphors as soon as it appears.

That every moment of the transformation of the world into images is at the crossroads of multiple tracks of thought is the new presupposition. Seen in this light, an image that gives the illusion of meaning must be one that suppresses the contradictory elements and extols the meaningful metonymic ones within its parts. Yet it is generally called an objective representation. Whereas an image that more accurately renders the processes through which the world comes to us reflects the fact that at any moment fragments of thought and feelings come from different realms of experience, knowing and being, dreaming, remembering and forgetting, fantasy and fact are forever interfering with the logical unfolding of meaning. Scenography is an attempt to capture these competing "voices" within the space of an art work.

Yet another presupposition being questioned today concerns the nature and

⁶Jacques Lacan, "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," *Structuralism*, ed. Jacques Ehrmann (New York: Anchor, 1970), p. 106.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 112.

operation of metaphors. It has been generally assumed that "any conjunction of two signifiers would be equally sufficient to constitute a metaphor."⁹ The surrealists further believed that the most creative metaphor "required the greatest disparity of the images signified."¹⁰ Magritte writing "This is not a pipe" underneath the drawing of a pipe was applying these principles. The surrealist view was that *after* the cliché way of associating drawing and words failed questioning would begin: Why is this not a pipe? What connotations in the word "pipe" are present and absent in the image? A new way of associating the two terms would suggest itself; thoughts and feelings would then be forced beyond their habitual function.

This obsession with dialectical processes, indeed confirmed by Breton's statement "I truly do not see why...we should abstain from considering...the problems of love, dream, madness, art (sic), and religion in the way they (the Hegelian dialecticians) — and we — envisage Revolution"¹¹ led the surrealists to overlook the possibility that metaphor might not need the full unfolding of a dialectic formulation in order to occur. In the often quoted sequence cited by Breton in the same passage, "The rose is a rose. The rose is not a rose. And yet the rose is a rose"¹² the metaphor begins to form the moment the words "the rose is..." have been uttered and no later, for in these words all the associative properties of a rose are potentially there already — including what a rose is not.

This alternative way of understanding metaphor, fully developed by Paul Ricoeur in *La Métaphore Vive*¹³ and implicit in Lacan's formulation cited earlier is the basis on which scenographic artists envisage metaphor today, following in this respect the example set by Jasper Johns in his well known *Flag* painting. Not only does the title "Flag" produce in the viewer the same questioning that Magritte's "This is not a pipe" induced, it also assumed a definition of metaphor which, as Lacan might have observed, is much closer to Freud's understanding of metaphor than the surrealist's definition. According to Freud, "metaphor occurs at the precise point at which sense comes out of nonsense, that is at the frontier which...when crossed the other way produces wit."¹⁴ It does not take much imagination to note

⁹Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 115.

¹¹"Je ne vois vraiment pas. . .pourquoi nous nous abstiendrions de soulever. . . sous le même angle que celui sous lequel ils envisagent — et nous aussi — la Révolution, les problèmes de l'amour, du rêve, de la folie et de la religion." André Breton, *Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris: Idées, 1965), p. 96.

¹²"La rose est une rose. La rose n'est pas une rose. Et pourtant la rose est une rose." Breton, p. 96.

¹³Paul Ricoeur, *La Métaphore Vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), especially the seventh and eighth "étude."

¹⁴Lacan, op. cit., p. 116.

that part of the wit in Johns' flag image lies in the subtle displacement of his image vis à vis a more cliché method of thinking of flags. In the painting, the flag is taut and hard instead of limply hanging from the end of a stick; it oozes a gelatinous texture instead of being silky and pristine to the touch. That the "creative spark of metaphor" springs from two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the hidden signifier then remaining present through its (metonymic) relation to the rest of the chain,¹⁵ is the new presupposition underlying the production of metaphors today.

Put in another way, the metaphor in Johns' *Flag* painting requires a structural analysis of two disparate images but not their co-presence on canvas as the surrealists assumed; the painting evinces their mutual properties. It is this open-endedness of metaphor that Donald Kuspit calls attention to as well when he writes (of New Image painting): "Metaphor seems to acquire even more exotic limits than surrealism stretched it to, but the binding middle term that grounds the metaphor seems unspecifiable."¹⁶ Unspecifiable or hiding?

Once these changed presuppositions have been formulated and the misreading of metaphor by the surrealists exposed, the question then becomes what in the surrealist project is still valid and in what way are today's productions indebted to surrealism yet new?

Within the surrealist camp, Antonin Artaud plays an ambiguous yet important role. Successively worshipped and anathemized by André Breton, endowed with the clairvoyance of genius yet suffering from bouts of insanity, Artaud made his mark as the apologist of a certain kind of surrealist theatre known as the Theatre of Cruelty. This appellation refers to the fact that in his theatre, the human speakers are not given a script to learn and mouth but are asked to expose their inner selves; they scream, they rage, they cry and they gesticulate, and let loose in the process whatever anger and violence they may have to repress under ordinary circumstances. But in the theatre of cruelty, human speakers interact with other speakers, the props, the lighting, the architecture, the scenery, and all the other imaginable elements of *mise-en-scène*. For, once liberated from the illustrative function they have in dialogue-oriented theatre, these elements of *mise-en-scène* reveal their expressivity, their existence as a language, their autonomous presence on the stage.

As such, they are the concrete analogues of Lacan's chains of signifiers, expelled so to speak from the abstract to the physical plane. These speaking elements are given a physical context: they are placed in the world. The stage is thus both a poetic mind-like place — the locus of surrealist metaphor — but it is

¹⁵Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁶Donald Kuspit, "Stops and Starts in Seventies Art and Criticism," *Arts* (March 1981), 97.

also a fragment of the world — something most of the surrealists overlooked.¹⁷ Artaud's view of the stage as "a physical and concrete place which demands to be filled and which must be made to speak its own concrete language,"¹⁸ as physical container and poetic active space crying for an appreciation of current scenographic space and productions. Note that in this view, the container and the contained are indivisibly linked; and that literal space and imaginative space are present as one image; and also that in Artaud's proposition there is no guarantee that meaning will ensue from the accomplishment of this filling process, only that something will be said.

Scenographic artists have heeded Artaud's admonition to treat space as sensitized space,¹⁹ and have made concrete for the viewer the languages of the stage. The pictorial aspects of what I call the scenographic — place, time, action — presented in visual form, essentially concern me here. But sound too — a key structural element in Artaud's sensitized space — can be experienced as image-provoking or scenographic. (Artaud, by the way, alludes to the fact that ear and eye are communicating vessels, that they constitute elements of a single world. Speaking of a picture by a Dutch primitive he writes: "Before being able to see what it is, one feels that something important is going on there; the ear, one could say, is moved by it at the same time as the eye."²⁰) Needless to say, place, time, action are not at all clear-cut categories. Works which suggest place, evoke also time and action, while those that allude to time suggest place and action, and so on.

Place

Forms reminiscent of familiar objects (seats by Scott Burton, furniture by Richard Artschwager), sculpture on the threshold of architecture (*Two Stories with Porch* by Donna Dennis), architectural drawings (*Delirious New York* by Rem Koolhaas), shapes decorated with pattern (*A Room for All Seasons* by Miriam Shapiro) impart to me the first hint of this new sensibility. We are confronted with props (Michael Singer — *First Gate Ritual*) removed from any context that would make their function intelligible; with pieces that seem to have been borrowed from a stage designer's arsenal, whether in the form of drawing (Robert Morris — *In the*

¹⁷Magritte, for example, overlooked the role that the white paper ground plays in directing meaning so that the drawing is accepted as the image of a pipe.

¹⁸Antonin Artaud, "Metaphysics and Mise-en-Scène" (1931, 1936), *The Theatre and Its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

¹⁹Jacques Garelli in Artaud et la Notion du Lieu (Paris: Corti, 1982) refers to this space as "lieu pensant."

²⁰Artaud, op. cit.

Realm of the Carceral), fabrics with class connotations (Tina Girouard — *Screen Sequence*), maquettes (Siah Armajani — *Covered Bridge*), costumes — by Judith Shae or by the Catalan artist Frederic Amat.

Some sculptural environments (Alice Aycock — *The Angels Continue Turning the Wheels of the Universe*) look at the way the stage often looks today when the spectator arrives at the theatre: the curtain is up although no actors are present yet, and here and there are things, contraptions, some of which are nameable, others not. Then, as the play or performance unfolds, everyone of the objects becomes imbued with a role, a function. Other pieces (the screen at the Museum of Modern Art fabricated by Kim McConnel) suggest an action has taken place within but is now over and one wonders what various things still lying around may have possibly been used for. Some drawings (Gendelsonas-Agrest — *Architecture between Memory and Amnesia*), the floor pieces by the Poiriers, the corner pieces by Charles Simmonds are of the same order as those an archeologist would make in an attempt at reconstituting a vanished city or artifact on the basis of incomplete data.

In short, what we find in work that suggests place is imagery pregnant with, but not yielding meaning, story, history or myth.

Time

It has been said that story-telling is a basic need. I am not sure what is meant by that, but I would say that when there is story-telling there is elapsing time, and where the lapsing of time is experienced, so is life. However, story-telling is inevitably packed with illusions and lies, either avowedly so as in fairy tales, or covertly so in what are called history books. Helen and Newton Harrison use contradictory sources — the way the story of the extinction of an Indian tribe called the Gabrielino has been reported vs. what ecological documentation shows us must have happened. Through their photographs of nature, they try to convey an experience of time shed of ideological dust.

It is also, I think, to subvert the lying tactics of straight coherent narrative that artists using taped voices with or without a visual ambience (Les Levine, Vito Acconci), or others using live voice with accompanying slide show (John Boone), guide viewers' image-making capacities in several directions at once. Variations on this procedure are infinite as are the media available. Photo-image with caption (Bill Beckley, Jean Legac), drawing plus text (John Borofsky, Alexis Smith), voice plus instrument (Laurie Anderson), voice plus gesture (Linda Mussmann's *Door*), film with multiple tracks (Yvonne Rainer, Douglas Davis, Marguerite Duras), props plus actors plus sound plus film (Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, Ping Chong), film plus dance movement plus sound (Meredith Monk, Elaine Summers).

In her piece called *Crow's Nest*, Summers projects on a four-sided screen a

slow-moving film of fluttering branches and trees, of waves breaking on the beach, while dancers weave slowly in and out of sight to a voice composition by Pauline Oliveros. In this instance, what is left of storytelling is a clue to its basic necessity, that something be experienced in time. In time something is always happening; if there is time, there is story-telling. Or to quote Paul Ricoeur, "as soon as there is change, there is history." What is curious about time experienced through these forms of art is that it is neither purely subjective time (waiting for something to happen) nor purely objective time (looking at one's watch) but time experienced by the onlooker as changes in the structural configuration of things in space, time made perceptible as a necessity of life.

Action

If I am correct in thinking that artists of the '70s are investigating the implications of Artaud's sensitized, activated space, in search of thresholds of expressivity, and that they are doing this by using coded images that allude minimally either to place or to time, it would then seem likely that we come across artists focussing on action — with actors being shown as a minimal level of dramatic momentum. Neil Jenney, in *Husband and Wife* places on painterly ground two of these "actors" in rather stereotypical and inexpressive poses. What, if anything, is going on between those two is unfathomable, but indices such as the short skirt on the woman and the fact that the man is coatless, send certain signals of identification to an audience. Nicholas Africano, using stereotyped little figures, as you might find them in medical textbooks, also presents the viewer with minimal indices for a potential scenario, through dress and gesture. Robert Longo showed in a 1979 performance, a couple dressed in '40s clothes dancing a swing ever so slowly as in a movie running at slow speed. No sound, no props. Then a saxophonist enters the room playing his instrument deliberately slowly also. Action in these works escapes being encapsulated into a traditional narrative with its load of causal explanations, motivations and intentions. While pregnant with story but yielding none, the images can only gain in meaning through the active involvement of a viewer.

That scenographic artists have expanded the notion of "speaking objects" well beyond the realm of theatre is apparent from the variety of art I have described above. The media have been a particularly rich source of imagery and scenographic artists must recognize a debt to Pop art in this respect. But where Pop artists tended to quote obviously loaded images such as the hidden persuaders of advertising, the scenographic artists recognize that all images from photography to illustrations in dictionaries are "loaded." Furthermore, where the Pop artists tended to formalize their data, the scenographic artists want to shortcircuit it.

One of these scenographic artists, Jack Goldstein, has gone to a sound library of the type that used to provide background material for radio dramas, and one of the products of his search is a record called *6 Minute Drown*. When, in the 1930s, the audience of a radio drama said "Look, he is drowning, how awful" the audience would go along with the false depth and be carried away. When Goldstein plays the record of the gurgling sound without the "Look, he is drowning," the illusion stops working. The listener laughs, realizes the sound has been faked and begins to listen to it closely, trying to figure out the way it is made and possibly fills the sound with his own images. What Goldstein does is break down a fully-functioning illusion by removing context from the original performance. The listener can then take his or her distances from the narrative and, in so doing, watch a piece of the so-called rational edifice that structures the world collapse. Such is also the project of the other scenographic artists I have mentioned here.

Using various strategies ranging from isolating figures on an empty ground to presenting us with nearly empty stages and semirecognizable props and patterns, from offering vertiginous perspective of things to reducing them to mere silhouettes, and including taking us along one narrative path with image and along another one with text, they establish situations in which the data loses its illusionary function of conveying a meaning without losing its metaphoric, albeit poetic content.

To those who would denounce scenography as being too close to conceptual art in their common investigatory spirit, one can answer that scenographic art is a synthesis of analytical and intuitive modes. One thing is sure: scenographic artists accept the fact that part of the function of an artist is to make things — something which a filmmaker, even of the most conceptual variety, must know too.

To critics who suggest that this genre, because it generally feeds on precoded imagery, on forms that the spectator or the listener has already encountered and pretty well understands, is too seductive, too compromised with the values of a bourgeois audience (this applies particularly to pattern painting), I would say that unlike previous art movements in which to be first meant to be best, this may not be the case with scenographic art. There is no reason to assume that the investigation of speaking elements reaches its limits when it analyzes precoded imagery.

The structural elements of painting are themselves speaking elements, something which Jasper Johns explored. But there are other speaking elements being uncovered all the time. It remains a possibility that the different styles of Modernism are speaking elements on a par with more precisely coded elements. The context in which art is seen is also a speaking element — a fact which hardly needs demonstration. It tells us why graffiti in the subway is treated with less respect than graffiti on black velvet, why an exhibition at Castelli does not have the same political implications as a show at the First Precinct or at *Group Material*. Time, the way a work of art ages, is also a speaking element which must not be overlooked.

Furthermore, it is true that as art gives up defining itself internally and re-examines the theatrical, it reconnects with a tradition — from say the Renaissance to Courbet — that did (as in fact all theatre does) presuppose the existence of an audience.

I recently came across an article by John Barth on the literature of replenishment that I feel is pertinent to this issue. Speaking of his ideal fiction writer of tomorrow, Barth says: "He has the first half of our century under his belt, but not on his back. . . . He may not hope to reach and move the devotees of James Michener or Irving Wallace, not to mention the lobotomized mass-media illiterates. But he should hope to reach and delight, at least part of the time, beyond the circle of what Mann used to call the Early Christian professional devotees of high art."²¹ Possibly, scenographic art can do that too.

²¹John Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1980.

CONTRIBUTORS

ALEXANDER ALLAND, Jr., is an anthropologist whose books include *The Human Imperative* and *The Artistic Animal: An Inquiry into the Biological Roots of Art*. He is Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University.

ERICKA BECKMAN is a filmmaker living in New York. Her works include *Hit and Run*, *We Imitate: We Break-Up* and *Out of Hand*. Her photographic works were recently curated by John Howell for *Critical Perspectives* at P.S. 1.

CHARLES BERNSTEIN is the author of *Controlling Interests*, *Poetic Justice*, *Shade* and *Stigma*. Co-editor of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, a journal of contemporary poetics, his work is the subject of the current special issue of *The Difficulties*.

PETER CARRAVETTA is the author of *Existenz* (1978) and *Delle Voci* (1980). Recently he translated *Anaphilosophia: The Art of Language* by Martino Oberto (Out of London Press, 1982). He is currently editing a book on the critical philosophy of post-Modernism.

MICHÈLE CONE is the author of *The Roots and Routes of Art in the 20th Century*. She is currently teaching at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

MAUREEN CONNOR is a sculptor who has exhibited most recently at the Ft. Worth Art Museum in Texas and the Palazzo Farnese in Ortona, Italy. Her writing has appeared in *Artforum* and *Review: Artists on Art*. She has taught the history of fashion at Cooper Hewitt Museum and currently at Parsons School of Design.

DONNA DENNIS is a sculptor living in New York.

DENIZ FIRINCIOĞLU is a Fulbright Fellow in Comparative Literature at New York University.

SEMIH FIRINCIOĞLU is a dramaturg, composer and critic. His translations of Samuel Beckett's works and Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* into Turkish are forthcoming. He is now serving military duty in the Turkish army.

ANGUS FLETCHER is a literary philosopher, critic and the author of several books, including *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (New York, 1964).

JACK GOLDSTEIN is an artist working in film, phonograph records, photography, performance and painting. His work was recently exhibited at *Dokumenta* in Cologne.

HARMONY HAMMOND works primarily as a painter and sculptor. She has been an organizer in the feminist art movement since 1970, and has lectured and written extensively in this area. Her work has appeared in such magazines as *Heresies*, *Conditions* and *Art in America*.

KARSTEN HARRIES is the author of *The Meaning of Modern Art: A Philosophical Interpretation*. He is philosopher of aesthetics at Yale University.

SOPHIE HAWKES is an artist whose work includes etchings, lithography and collage. She is currently working on a series of puppet-sculptures.

BARBARA KRUGER is an artist and critic living in New York.

S. B. LAUFER is a painter living in New York. Her books include *Photogram*, *Not*, and *The Occurrence of Tune* (in collaboration with Charles Bernstein). She is a former editor of *Women Artists News*.

CARLA LISS is the co-publisher of *Paranoids Anonymous Newsletter (P.A.N.)*. Recent exhibitions include *Film as Installation* at the Clocktower and *Transparent Matter* at P.S. 1.

ROBERT LONGO is an artist working with sculpture, drawing, film and performance. *Sound Distance*, which forms part of *Empire: A Performance Trilogy*, was recently performed at The Kitchen. He is currently exhibiting in *Focus on the Figure: Twenty Years* at the Whitney Museum.

JUN MAEDA is a stage worker.

ROSEMARY MAYER has exhibited sculptures and watercolors in galleries, museums

and alternative spaces throughout the United States. Her translation of Jacopo da Pontormo's diary was recently published by Out of London Press. Models for outdoor works were recently exhibited in her show *Moon Tent: Plans for Collaborative Projects* at the Women's Interart Center in New York.

ALLAN McCOLLUM is a painter who lives in New York. His article on Matt Mullican recently appeared in *Reallife Magazine*.

LINDA MUSSMANN is the Artistic Director of Time & Space Ltd. and the co-publisher with Claudia Bruce of TSL Press.

OCHIISHI is a poet and postcard artist. She translated Gertrude Stein's *Ida* into Japanese.

RAFFAELE PERROTTA is a critic, filmmaker and philosopher. An editor of *Altri termini* and *Fenomenologia e società*, he has also written several books, among which, *Lo schermo negato: cronache del cinema italiano non ufficiale*, with Sirio Luginbühl (Milan: Shakespeare & Company, 1976) and *Per organo* (1977). His 8 mm. and 16 mm. films include *Kolossal* (1970), *Hans Richter* (1973); and *Verso Sirio (alza un canto), e quando germinante* (1976-76), *In tal fuoco, verso di cui — Honras*, more recently, *Narciso, solo*. His book *The Ancient Diaphora* is forthcoming from Out of London Press. He teaches theoretical philosophy at the University of Venice in Italy.

CHARLES RILEY is an associate editor at Doubleday and Company. He is currently preparing an article on the color theories of Goethe, Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein.

MEG SHORE is an artist whose paintings have been exhibited internationally at museums such as the Palazzo Ducale in Genoa, the Gallerie Arco D'Alibert in Rome and C Space in New York.

VALENTINE TATRANSKY is a contributing editor to *Arts Magazine* and New York correspondent for *Art International*.

ANN WILSON is a multi-media artist and member of the Byrd Hoffman Foundation. *Faust Part II* was recently performed at Marymount Manhattan Stage, New York.

T S L PRESS

Mussmann Bruce Publishers

BOOKS IN PRINT

Linda Mussmann, *Room/Raum*

Richard Milazzo (ed.), *Beauty and Critique*

Georg Büchner, *Danton's Death*. Translated by Hedwig Rappolt.

FORTHCOMING TITLES

Harmony Hammond, *Wrappings*

Hedwig Rappolt, (ed.), *LENZ: A Model of Madness*.

Georg Büchner, *Leonce & Lena*. Translated by Hedwig Rappolt.

T S L PRESS

139 West 22nd Street

New York, New York 10011

(212) 741-1032

TSL

